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GOSSE'S NORTHERN STUDIES.



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# NORTHERN STUDIES.

BY EDMUND GOSSE.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE.

THE new interest that has grown up lately among us here in England, in the history and literature of the North, is remarkable. One of the three first of our living English poets has thrown the whole weight of his poetry into the revival, with characteristic energy, and his *Sigurd the Volsung* serves well to typify what it was that first drew us to the fresh ground offered by the North to the imagination. It was, I suppose, with a certain romantic sense of the past represented by the heroic figure of Sigurd, that most of us first turned to the poetry of Norway and its fellow countries. But our interest is clearly leading us a long way when it brings us from Sigurd the Volsung to the modern Dr. Stockmann, of Ibsen's *En Folkefiende*, and to other such types of the contemporary Norseman. Indeed some critics, like Mr. Robert Buchanan, who have loved the romantic North not a little, resent greatly that the law of painful development from old to new should be at work here too. It is a wiser spirit surely, that, recognising fully all the old romance, and making much of the past, has yet wished to face the present, and has given us these *Northern Studies*, in which we find traced with so much sympathy and charm some of the modern developments of Scandinavian literature.

The growth and movement of Dano-Norwegian poetry, and its readjustment under modern, difficult conditions, have a closer interest for us in some ways than the changes in any other literature of modern Europe. Volsung and Niblung, Warrior and Viking and Skald, Norseman and Dane, were, as we remember, our forefathers. Whether we agree with Canon Taylor or not in removing the seed-ground of our race from Asia

to Finland, the fact of our descent through Norse and Danish blood remains of course the same. Thus it comes that there is a peculiar interest for us, in tracing how the undiluted native, Northern stock, from which we sprang, is affected in its growth and conscious expression of itself at home to-day, by later influences, as of Commerce, the *Bourgeois* Sentiment, international criticism, and so forth. In its readjustment to these awkward new demands we may find, as Mr. Gosse points out, a striking correspondence to our own literary attitude and predicament, and find it all the more because we feel that in many ways these Northern poets and writers have a racial affinity to ourselves, and show in their work certain tendencies to good and bad that are quite singularly like our own. In Hansen, Wergeland, Welhaven, Munch, Asbjørnsen—not to speak of still later living writers, whose work has yet to be fully measured—we see curious, and often as it were satirical, reflections of the noble company of Victorian poets and rhymesters who have so often beguiled us, more or less successfully, into admiring their good and bad qualities.

All these things, however, are so admirably told by Mr. Gosse in his various reports of the writers of the North, that there is really little need to do more than suggest them in this preamble. Better perhaps that one should try and recall, as a test and measure of poetical values, before turning to his pages, something of the ancient spirit of the race and its early poetry. Fortunately we have already in this Camelot Series the very best expression of that spirit that we could possibly have, in the *Volsunga Saga*, in which, to quote a line from Mr. Morris's prologue—

“The very heart of the North bloomed into song.”

Some passage out of the chapters that tell Sigurd's story in the *Volsunga Saga* may recall better than anything else that ancient spirit of fire and storm and the sword; as, for example, this which tells how he found Brynhild asleep in her castle on the mountain:—“By long roads,” says the Saga, “rides Sigurd till he comes at the last up on to Hindfëll, and wends his way

south to the land of the Franks ; and he sees before him on the fell a great light, as of fire burning, and flaming up even unto the heavens ; and when he came thereto, lo, a shield-hung castle before him, and a banner on the topmost thereof : into the castle went Sigurd, and saw one lying there asleep, and all-armed. Therewith he takes the helm from the head of him, and sees that it is no man, but a woman." So begins one of the noblest love-stories ever told, which has fascinated so many poets besides him who first told it, and him who first translated it into English for us.

With such associations as this and other episodes of the *Volsunga Saga* call up, we will do well to surround the new North of Björnson and Ibsen, if we wish to measure its contemporary activities in literature by its past.

We will do well to recall too other men of the same race and spirit—Halfdan the Swarthy, Harold the Fairhaired, Erik, Haakon the Good, and other kings of Norway down to Sverre Sigurdsson, in whom the instincts of democrat and aristocrat seemed so finely mingled, "in point of genius greatest of all." For the political life of Norway has been closely allied throughout with its literary development, and in our own English political life, and in our English literature, we owe very much to Norse and to Norman invasion. For, as one historian of Norway, Mr. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, himself a native of the country, now living in America and writing in English—a striking instance, let us note in passing, of our international literary amenities—has put it, "These tall, blonde men, with their defiant blue eyes, who obeyed their kings while they had confidence in them, and killed their kings when they had forfeited respect, were the ancestors of the Normans who, under William the Conqueror, invaded England."

But this is a schoolboy's tale. Indeed it is so familiar that we are likely to overlook it, with other familiar things in old English history, which yet have a considerable light to throw upon contemporary literature, if we would but realise it. So, at any rate, remembering Viking and Norman, and remembering in the earliest twilight of history, when history is indeed



half romance, Odin and Sigurd and their great kin, we shall turn to these pages of Mr. Gosse with something of his own enthusiasm, and of his sense of the immense past from which the modern poets of the North, whom he has so well chronicled, are descended.

In welcoming, then, Mr. Gosse to the worshipful fellowship of Camelot—an adventurous company which, after many mishaps and no doubt some mistakes, finds itself to-day in better heart than ever—one feels that he brings to it news of some moment. Now that we are all eagerly scanning the European horizon in the hope of seeing appear the new Avatar, in North or South, all news of the kind that Mr. Gosse here brings is full of interest and stimulus. To the North especially, whose spirit of poetry we had thought before to be only idyllic and romantic, we are learning to turn our eyes more and more for sterner contemporary qualities.

Whether we accept Tolstoi or Ibsen, as do their more extreme followers and admirers, or no, we must yet feel and admit the immense force and significance of their attempt. "The ancient skald," said Longfellow, in writing about the older poets of the North, "smote the strings of his harp with as bold a hand as the Berserk smote his foe." With something of the same boldness, it seems, these modern interpreters of Northern race are facing the spirit of their time, and we do well to take all critical account of the attempt. If only the pages that follow helped us to refer such a striking figure as Ibsen to his national antecedents, and to relate him (*à la M. Taine*) to "the race, the milieu, and the moment," their addition to the documents of European literary interest would be notable. But they do this, not only for Ibsen, but for other and different figures—so different as Björnson and Bödtcher, Runeberg, and our beloved Hans Andersen, and offer again suggestions of curious interest for the English dramatic critic in their account of the happily conditioned National Theatre of Denmark.

To the holiday traveller who thinks of Norway this year as his happy hunting ground, and cares to recall there the imaginative colouring that its poets have given to its fjords and fells, surely

no pleasanter companion could be suggested than this book of *Northern Studies*. In this series, which has always aimed rather at providing such companions for street and field than mere scholars' texts, the book falls very opportunely at this moment. It needs only to be explained that the essays contained in it, which have several times been reprinted, were first issued in book form in 1879 as the Scandinavian section of a volume of *Studies in the Literature of Northern Europe*, one chapter being now added for the first time. Let me say, in conclusion, it is matter of special gratitude to Mr. Gosse that he has made this new edition possible.

EDITOR.

25th April 1892.



## NORTHERN STUDIES.

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### *NORWEGIAN POETRY SINCE 1814.*

It seems a pity that our knowledge of neighbouring countries should be limited so closely to their topographical features. We travel through them by rail or steamer, we talk a little broken English with postboys and boatmen, and we presume that we know something of the nations. But in truth it is but the outermost shell that we can see ; of the thought and passion of the people—of their pursuits, and ambitions, and desires—we know no more than the birds do when they fly over the land and rest on their migratory journeys. When a language is limited to a race inconsiderable in numbers, the isolation of its thought from foreigners is, of course, vastly increased. Here, in England it is not worth while that many of us should learn such a language as the Dano-Norwegian, spoken by a population less than that of London. Life is too short for many such toilsome lessons, and hence we remain greatly in ignorance of what is being wrought in art and literature among such near neighbours as the Norsemen. Still, I say again, it is a pity, since doubtless in many comparatively small communities there is an intellectual

activity, and a positive success in execution, which it would interest us to become acquainted with. I shall endeavour to show that such is the case among the Norwegians.

It would be hard to point out any country in Europe whose condition at the present moment presents a more satisfactory aspect than Norway. It is not perhaps universally known that its constitution is the only one that survives out of all those created or adapted to suit the theories of democracy that prevailed in the beginning of the century. Though accepting the King of Sweden as titular monarch, Norway really rules itself, sends to Christiania a parliament (the Storting), elected from all classes of society, and has not scrupled, on occasion, to overrule the King's especial commands, even at the risk of civil war. There is no hereditary nobility in Norway; no political restriction on the press; hardly any class distinction; and yet, so conservative, so dignified, is the nation, that freedom hardly ever lapses into licence, and the excesses which larger republics permit themselves would be impossible here. It is necessary to preface my remarks on the poetry of Norway with this statement, because the poets there, where they have been poets worth considering, have been also politicians; and I shall be obliged, on this account, to refer now and again to political developments, though I shall hope to make these references as short as possible. The political life of Norway would be in itself a fertile subject to dwell upon.

It is no more than an arbitrary dictum that fixes the

rise of Norwegian literature at the date of the Declaration of Independence of 1814. For two centuries past the country had been producing eminent writers, who had attained distinction both as poets and as men of science. The great naturalists of Norway require, and deserve, an abler pen than mine; it is with the poets that I propose to deal. A few of these, such as Peder Dass and Dorte Engelbrechtsdatter, had preserved in the old days their national character, and sung to the Northmen only; but for the most part the writers of Norway looked to Denmark for their audience and are to this day enrolled among the Danish poets. Holberg, Wessel, Tullin, Frimann, and a score of others were as truly Norwegians as Welhaven and Ibsen are, but Copenhagen was the scene of their labours, Danes were their admirers and patrons, and it is in Danish, not Norwegian, literature that they find their place. Hence it has been the habit of the Scandinavian critics to commence their histories of Norwegian bibliography with the demonstration at Eidsvold, when Norway asserted her independence, and finally separated from Denmark.

The *Norske Selskab* ("Norwegian Society"), that evil genius and yet, in a measure, protector of the literature it presumed to govern, had now for more than forty years scattered thunderbolts from its rooms at Copenhagen, and ruled the world of letters with a rod of iron. But this singular association, that had nourished Wessel, snubbed Edvard Storm, and hunted Ewald to the death, no longer possessed its ancient force. The glory was departing, and

when the rupture with Denmark came about, the Norske Selskab began to feel that Copenhagen was no longer a fit field of action, and, gathering its robes about it, it fled across the sea to Christiania, where it dwindled to a mere club, and may, for aught I know, still so exist, a shadow of its former self. But though the Selskab, once dreaded as the French Academy was, no longer had fangs to poison its opponents, its traditions of taste still ruled the public. Accordingly the aspect of affairs in the literary world of Christiania in the proud year of 1814 is at this distance of time neither inspiring nor inviting. Newspapers hurriedly started and ignorantly edited, a theatre where people went to see dull tragedies of Nordal Brun's, or, worse still, translations of tawdry dramas of the Voltaire school, a chaos of foolish political pamphlets : these meet us on every hand, and every sort of writing seems to abound, save that which is the result of fine criticism and good taste. The Selskab admitted but two kinds of poetry—the humorous and the elegiac. Every one knows what elegies used to be, what a plague they had become, and how persistently “elegant” and “ingenious” writers poured them forth. And, indeed, according to the journals of that time in Christiania, every verse-writer was ingenious and every tale-writer elegant. There was a total want of discrimination ; every man wrote what was pleasing in his own eyes, and had it printed too ; for the newspapers were open to all comers, and no poems were too stupid to be admitted. The whole country went wild with the new-found liberty ; like an overdose of exhilarating tonic,

freedom threw Norway into a sort of delirium, and all was joyous, confused, and irrational. Out of all this arose a new class of poetry that ran side by side with the elegiac, and after a while overwhelmed it. This has been called "Syttendemai-Poesi," or poesy of the 17th of May—the day on which Christian was proclaimed King of Norway, and the Storthing was finally instituted. This poesy, of course, was intensely patriotic, taking the form of odes to Eidsvold, hymns to Old Norway, and defiance to the world at large. It is tedious, and sometimes laughable if read now; but then it had its significance, and was the inarticulate cry of a young, unsatisfied nation.

Out of the froth and whirl of the "Syttendemai-Poesi" the works of three poets rise and take a definite shape. These claim particular notice, mainly because of their real worth, but they gained it at the time perhaps more by the extraordinary zeal with which they stood by and puffed one another. They have been called the Trefoil, so impossible is it to consider them separately; and in this triplicity of theirs they formed a considerable figure in their day. I speak of Schwach, Bjerregaard, and M. C. Hansen. The first-mentioned was the most admired then and is the least regarded now. C. A. Schwach was born in a village by the shores of Lake Miösen in 1793, and after holding a high official position at Trondhjem for a great many years, died at Skien in 1860. His poems, originally printed in stray newspapers, were collected in three great volumes. They are very dull, being for the most part occasional verses called forth by events which



are now entirely forgotten. Schwach, once the idol of the clubs and the popular poet of the day, is now seldom read and never reprinted; he exists mainly as the author of one or two popular songs that have not yet lost their charm. Bjerregaard was a man of far higher talent than Schwach; there was more melody in his heart than on his tongue; his lyrics have still some music about them, and some dewiness and sparkle. His countrymen usually class him as a poet below Hansen, and if we include, as they do, novels and all sorts of æsthetic writing as part of a poet's vocation, they are doubtless right, for Hansen won great fame as a writer of romances; but in poetry proper I must, for my own part, set Bjerregaard far higher than his friends as a master of the art. He had greater reticence than they, and a brighter touch; he even had some desire for novelty in the matter of versification, and wrote in *terza rima* and other new metres. He produced a tragedy too, *Magnus Barfods Sønner* ("Magnus Barefoot's Sons"), which, I am bound to say, I have found wonderfully dreary. He was happiest in lyrical writing. I may point in passing to his pretty verses, *Vinterscener* ("Winter Scenes"), in the small collected edition of his works. He was born in the same village as Schwach was, but a year earlier, and died in 1842. M. C. Hansen, a prolific writer of novels, published exceedingly little verse, of an artificial and affected kind. Glancing down his pages we notice such titles as "The Pearl," "The Rainbow," "Nature in Ceylon," and we easily gather the unreal and forced nature of the sentiment he deals in.

His romances are said to be of a better character, and he led the van of those happy innovators who turned to the real life of their humbler countrymen for a subject for their art. For this discovery, the beauty that lies hidden in a peasant's life, we must thank Hansen, and forgive his poetical sins. He died a few days before his friend Bjerregaard, and Schwach collected his works in eight huge volumes.

If there were nothing better in Norwegian poetry than the writings of these three friends, it would not be worth while to catalogue their tedious productions, and the reader might wisely turn away to more inspiring themes. But it is not so. This early period of Syttendemai-Poesi is but the ridge of light-blown sand over which the traveller has to toil from his boat till he reaches the meadows and the heathery moorlands beyond. We come now to a poet whose genius, slowly developing out of the chaotic elements around it, took form, and colour, and majesty, till it lifted its possessor to a level with the noblest spirits of his time.

Henrik Arnold Thaulov Wergeland was born at Christianssand in 1808, and was the son of a political pamphleteer who attained some prominence in the ranks of the popular party. The father was one of the original members of the Storting, and consequently the earliest years of the poet were spent at Eidsvold, in the very centre of all the turmoil of inexperienced statesmanship. Eidsvold was the vortex into which the bombast and false sentiment of the nation naturally descended, and it is

impossible to doubt that the scenes of his boyhood distinctly infused into Wergeland's nature that strong political bias that he never afterwards threw off. By-and-by the lad went up to the University of Christiania, and entered heart and soul into the caprices of student life; his excesses, however, seem to have been those of eccentricity and mischievousness, for neither at this time nor ever after through his chequered life did he lose that blameless character, the sweetness of which won praise even from his enemies. It was about this time that he fell in love with a young lady whom he had seen once only, and that in the street. He named her Stella, and being unable to find her address, wrote daily a letter to her, tore it up, and threw it out of window. His landlady remarked that the apple-blossom was falling early that year. This ideal love for "Stella" woke the seeds of poetry in him. He began to versify, and soon forgetting Stella, worshipped a still less tangible but more important mistress, the Muse Thalia herself.

The first work published by the afterwards eminent poet was *Ah!* a farce. It is usual with his admirers to pass over this and his other boyish productions in silence; but it is undoubtedly a fact that after the appearance of *Ah!* in 1827, he wrote a great number of farces in quick succession. These farces were successful too, and the boy dramatist began to be talked of and admired. There were not wanting those even who called him "The Holberg of Norway," forgetting, it would seem, that Holberg himself, the inimitable, was a Norwegian. That

Wergeland himself did not prize these trifles very highly would seem from his publishing them under an Arabic pseudonym—"Siful Sifadda." Those who have read them speak of them as not altogether devoid of fun, but founded principally on passing events that have lost all interest now. But in 1828 he wrote a tragedy—*Sinclairs Døds* ("Sinclair's Death")—and in 1829 issued some lyrical poems that showed he had distinct and worthy aims in art. These poems had an immense success. They were brimful of tasteless affectations and outrages of rhythm as well as reason; but they were full too of Syttendemai enthusiasm, and they spread through the country like wild-fire. Wergeland became the poet of the people; his songs were set to music and sung in the theatres; they were reprinted in all the newspapers, and sold in halfpenny leaflets in the streets. Every 17th of May the people gathered to the poet's house and shouted, "Hurrah for Wergeland and Liberty!" His mild face, beaming behind great spectacles, his loose green hunting coat and shuffling gait, were hailed everywhere with applause. There are real and great merits about these early poems; they show some true knowledge of nature, some lyrical loveliness; but it was not for these, it was rather for the defiance of all laws of authorship that the people of Christiania adored him. In 1830 he published *Skabelsen, Mennesket og Mesias* ("The Creation, Man and the Messiah"), a drama of elephantine proportions. This portentous poem caused great diversion among the poet's enemies, and was the actual cause of an attack upon him,

which ultimately divided the nation into two camps, and revolutionised the literature of Norway.

In 1831 there appeared in one of the papers a short anonymous poem, "To H. Wergeland," which was chiefly remarkable for the sharpness of its satire and the extreme polish of its style. It was not in the least degree bombastic or affected, and consequently was a novelty to Norwegian readers. It lashed the author of *Skabelsen* with a pitiless calmness and seeming candour that were almost insufferable.

For years past there had been developing in Christiania a section of society whose interests and aims lay in a very different channel from those of the great bulk of the populace. These persons, of conservative nature, saw with regret the folly of much of the noisy mock-patriotism current; they sighed for the old existence, when the cliques of Copenhagen quietly settled all questions of taste, and if there was little fervour there was at least no bathos. The leading spirit of this movement, which may be called the Critical, was J. S. Welhaven, a young man who, born at Bergen in 1807, but early a student at the capital, had watched the career of Wergeland, and had conceived an intense disdain for his poetry and his friends. It was he who at last had let fly this lyric arrow in the dark, and who had raised such consternation among the outraged patriots. Wergeland replied by another poem, and a controversy insensibly sprang up. In 1832 Welhaven published a thin book—*H. Wergeland's Poetry*—which at once raised a howl from all the popular

journalists, and marks an era in literature. It consists of a calm and exasperating anatomy of the poet's then published writings, as withering and quite as amusing as Lord Macaulay's Essay on Robert Montgomery. It is even more bitter than this, and far more unjust, since the subject of it was a real poet and not a mere charlatan in verse. Still, with all his absurdities extracted and put side by side, Wergeland does cut a pitiable figure indeed, and one is tempted to forgive the critic when, throwing all mercy to the winds, he pours forth a torrent of eloquent invective, beginning with the words, "Stained with all the deadly sins of poesy," and ending with a consignment of the author to the "mad-house of Parnassus." Among the numerous replies called forth by this attack, the most notable was one by the poet's father, N. Wergeland, but his pamphlet, though doubtless able in its way, has nothing of the brilliant wit of Welhaven's little *brochure*.

Meanwhile the outraged poet himself, who throughout the controversy seems to have behaved with great discretion, continued to attend to his own affairs. In 1831 he published *Opium*, a drama, and in 1833 *Spaniolen*, a charming little poem, which shows a great improvement in style, and proves the beneficial effect of the criticism brought to bear on him. Still the mild-eyed man sauntered dreamily about in his loose green coat, but now he was less often seen in the streets, for, having bought a small estate just out of Christiania, he gave himself up to a passion for flowers, and to a grotto of great size and ingenuity. Poetry was the business of his

life, and his spare hours were given to his grotto and his flowers. The great controversy began to take a national character, and when, in 1834, Welhaven published his polemical poem of *Norges Dæmring* ("Norway's Twilight") there was no longer any personal bitterness in his attacks. In that exquisite cycle of sonnets he laid bare all the roots of evil and folly that were deadening the heart of the nation, and with a pitiless censure struck at the darling institutions of the national party. He called for a wider patriotism and a healthier enthusiasm than the frothy zeal of the Syttendemai demonstrations could show, and in verse that was as sublime as it was in the truest sense patriotic, he prophesied a glorious future for the nation, when it should be led by calmer statesmen, and no longer beaten about like an unsteady ship by every wind of faction. Then Norwegians would estimate their own dignity justly; then poetry and painting, journalism and statesmanship, all the arts and sciences, would join to form one harmonious whole, and the young nation grow up into a perfect man. Then, winding up his argument, he cries—

"Thy dwelling, peasant, is on holy ground;  
What Norway was, that she again may be,  
By land, by sea, and in the world of men!"

The publication of *Norges Dæmring* naturally enough called forth a still louder protestation from the popular leaders, and the battle raged more fiercely than ever. No longer was it the principal champions who led

the fight; these retired for a while, and their friends took up the cause. Sylvester Sivertson, a poor imitator of Wergeland, frantically attacked *Norges Dæmring*, and Hermann Foss, a new convert to the critical party, as stoutly defended it; and so matters went on till about 1838.

From this time misfortunes fell upon Wergeland in ever increasing severity. One by one the lights all faded out of his life, and left it wan and bare. First of all he lost an official position which brought him in a considerable income. The king, the unpopular John, in a moment of whim, deprived him of this office. Still the profits of his poems and the sums brought in by his theatrical writings were enough to keep him in comfort. The loose green coat was seen wandering about his garden more than ever; but in an unlucky moment King John repented of his haste, and ordered the poet a certain pension from the State. Wergeland consented to take the money only on the express condition that he was to be allowed to spend it all in the formation of a library for the poor; but alas! only half of this transaction was known to the public, and in the newspapers of the next week Wergeland found himself stigmatised by his own friends as "the betrayer of the Fatherland." So intensely unpopular was King John, that to receive money from him was to receive money, it was considered, from an enemy of the nation, and by a sharp revolution of Fortune's wheel the popular poet became the object of general distrust and disgrace. It is vain to argue against a sudden fancy of this kind; the remonstrances of



Wergeland were drowned in journalistic invective ; and the grief and humiliation acted so injuriously on the poet's irritable nerves that he fell into confirmed ill-health, and from this time rapidly sank towards death. Other sorrows followed that made these inner troubles still less bearable. The poet became involved in a tedious law-suit, which drained his finances so completely that the pretty country house, the grotto, and the beloved flower-beds had to be relinquished, and lodgings in town received the already invalided Wergeland. Shattered in body and estate, forsaken and misjudged by his countrymen, it might have been expected that the mind of the man would have been depressed and weakened, but it was not so. In a poem of this very time he says—

“ My house and ground,  
My horse and hound,  
I have passed away and are not found !  
But something yet within me lies  
That law and lawyer's touch defies.”

And it was just at this very time, when he was bowed down with adversity, that the singing faculty in him burst forth with unprecedented vigour, and found a purer and juster expression than ever before. The last five years of his life saw his genius scatter all the clouds and vapours that enwrapped it.

The first of these swan-songs was *Jan van Huysums Blomsterstykke* (“J. van Huysum's Flower-piece”), a series of lyrics with prose interjaculations. This is by far

the most beautiful of his political poems—for such it must be called, being thoroughly interpenetrated by his fiery republicanism. No poet, save Shelley, has decked the bare shell of politics with brighter wreaths than Wergeland; and it must be remembered that while in the mouth of an English poet these principles are dreamy and Utopian, to a Norwegian of that time they were matter of practical hope; and though Wergeland did not live to see it, there soon came a time when, King John having passed away, the high-minded Oscar permitted those very alterations in the Constitution which the popular party were sighing for. In *Jan van Huysums Blomsterstykke* the poet takes a flower-piece of that painter's cunning workmanship, and gazes at it till it seems to start into life, and the whole mass—flowers, insects, and the porcelain jar itself—becomes a symbol of passionate humanity to him. The blossoms are souls longing for a happier world; here the poppies cry for vengeance like bubbles of blood from the torn throat of some martyr for liberty; here the tulips flame out of their pale-green sheaths like men who burst their bonds and would be free; roses, columbines, narcissi, each suggest some brilliant human parallel to the poet, and all is moulded into verse that is melody itself. We rise from reading the poem as from studying some exquisite piece of majolica, or a page of elaborate arabesques; we feel it never can be as true to our own faith as it was to the writer's, but we regard it as a lovely piece of art, shapely and well-proportioned. It was presented as a bouquet to Fredrika Bremer.

The next year saw the publication of *Svalen* ("The Swallow"), a poem suggested by the bereavement of the poet's excellent sister Augusta. It was "a midsummer morning story for mothers who have lost their children," and was sent to cheer the downcast heart of his sister. It is one of the most ethereal poems ever written; a lyrical rhapsody of faith in God and triumph over death. A short extract will indicate the profuse and ebullient manner of its composition:—

“ Then I lifted  
 Up my soul, and saw the swallow  
 Sinking, floating, softly fly  
 Through the milk-white clouds on high,  
 And my heart rejoiced anew;  
 How she drifted !  
 Through the blue I scarce could follow  
 Her sun-gilded body, though  
 Sol lay in a dark cloud-hollow :  
 How she sprang ; and turned, in flashing,  
 As if weaving in mid-air  
 With her wing-points through and through  
 Some strange web of gold and blue.  
 With my thoughts I followed, dashing  
 Through the light with little care,  
 While the balsam-drops afar  
 On her beak  
 Glittered like a double star.”<sup>1</sup>

By this time the author was himself upon his death-bed, but he lingered a few years yet, long enough to see his

<sup>1</sup> Appendix A.

popularity slowly return, and to hear again the *vivats* of the people on the 17th of May. It was not his own troubles, but the grievances of a down-trodden people, that filled his last thoughts. By the laws of Norway no Jews whatever, under heavy penalties, might settle in the realm, and the hearts of high-minded men were exercised to put an end to this injustice. In 1842 Wergeland published *Jøden* ("The Jew"), an idyllic poem "in nine sprays of blossoming thorn," or cantos, in which the cause of the Hebrew outcasts was eloquently pleaded. The work created a great deal of excitement, and, to clinch the nail he had struck in, the poet produced in 1844 *Jødinden*, ("The Jewess"), in "eleven sprays of blossoming thorn." These powerful poems, accompanied by prose writings of a similar tendency, produced the desired effect, and the restriction was, in the course of a few years, removed.

But it was not for Wergeland to watch this consummation. Already the darkness of death was gathering round his bed, though the strong brain lost none of its power and the swift hand increased in cunning. A few months before the end his last and greatest poem appeared—*Den engelske Lods* ("The English Pilot")—in which all his early life of travel and excitement seems to have passed before his eyes and to have been photographed in verse. There is no trace here of depression or weakness; it is not the sort of book a man writes upon his death-bed; it is lively and full of incident, humorous and yet pathetic. The groundwork of the piece is a reminiscence of the

poet's own visit to England many years before. Kent, Brighton, the Isle of Wight, and the "Hampshire Fjord" are drawn in rose-colour by an only too enthusiastic pen, and the idyllic story that gives title to the whole—namely, the loves of Johnny Johnson and Mary Ann—is interwoven skilfully enough. The final episode, the return to the Norwegian province of Hardanger, is particularly vivid, and the descriptions of landscape singularly true and charming. Here is a fragment from the close of the poem, describing the native scenes:—

“ Where in pale blue ranks arise  
 Alps that rim the mountain valley;  
 Where above the crystal spring  
 Blooms the snow-white apple-tree,  
 And in tracks of snow you see  
 Wild white roses blossoming;  
 Where a stream begins its song  
 Like a wind-harp low and muffled,  
 Murmuring through the moss and stones;  
 Then among the alders moans,  
 Rushes out, involved and ruffled,  
 By a youthful impulse driven,  
 Foaming, till it reach the vale,  
 And, like David with his harp,  
 From a shepherd made a king  
 By the songs that it can sing,  
 Triumphs through the listening dale.”<sup>1</sup>

The only mistake is that the poet, whose English was defective, must needs preserve the local colouring by

<sup>1</sup> Appendix B.

hauling bits of our language, or what he supposed it to be, bodily into his verse. Such a passage as this, coming in the middle of an excited address to Liberty in England, breaks down one's gravity altogether—

“ Ho ! Johnny, ho ! how do you do ?  
Sing, Sailor, oh !  
Well ! toddy is the sorrows' foe !  
Sing, Sailor, oh ! ”

It should be a solemn warning to those who travel and then write a book, not to quote in the language of the country.

He sank slowly but steadily. His death was in some respects very singular. All through life he had enjoyed the presence and touch of flowers in a more intimate way than even most lovers of such sweet things can understand ; and as he became unconscious of the attentions of his friends, and inattentive even to his wife's voice, it was observed that he watched a wall-flower, blossoming in the window, with extraordinary intensity. The last verses which he composed, or at least dictated, were addressed to this plant, and form as remarkable a parting word of genius as any that has been recorded. These beautiful stanzas I have attempted to render as follows:—

“ O Wall-flower, or ever thy bright leaves fade,  
My limbs will be that of which all are made ;  
Before ever thou lovest thy crown of gold  
My flesh will be mould,

And yet open the casement; till I am dead,  
Let my last look rest on thy golden head !  
My soul would kiss thee before it flies  
To the open skies.

Twice I am kissing thy fragrant mouth,  
And the first kiss wholly is thine, in truth ;  
But the second remember, dear love, to close  
On my fair white rose.

I shall not be living its spring to see,  
But bring it my greeting when that shall be,  
And say that I wished that upon my grave  
It should bloom and wave.

Yes, say that I wished that against my breast  
The rose should lie that thy lips caressed,  
And, Wall-flower, do thou into Death's dark porch  
Be its bridal torch."<sup>1</sup>

At last, on July 12th, 1845, as his wife stood watching him, his eyes opened, and he said to her, "I was dreaming so sweetly; I dreamed I was lying in my mother's arms;" and so he sighed away his breath. His funeral was like that of a prince or a great general; all shops were shut, the streets were draped with black flags, and a great multitude followed the bier to the grave. When the coffin was lowered a shower of laurel crowns was thrown in from all sides. So passed away the most popular of northern poets in the thirty-eighth year of his life.

Welhaven's poetical activity reached its climax during the ten years that followed the death of Wergeland. His

<sup>1</sup> Appendix C.

poems were exclusively lyrical pieces of no great length; *Norges Dæmring* being the only long poem he attempted. He is singular, too, among Norwegian writers for having neyer at any part of his life written for the stage. His prose is as carefully elaborated as his verse, and is probably the most brilliant and finished in the language, or at least in Norwegian literature. His great mission seems to have been, like that of Lessing in Germany and Heiberg in Denmark, to revolutionise the world of taste, and to institute a great new school of letters, less by the production of fine works of art from himself than by the introduction of sound canons of criticism for the use of others. In 1840 Welhaven became professor of philosophy at the University, and between 1839 and 1859 published a series of volumes of poetry, chiefly romances and those small versified stories that are called "epical" poems in Scandinavia. These verses are very polished and correct in form, and they move with dignity and a certain virile power characteristic of their author, but they are lacking in the highest forms of imaginative originality. His prose writings were of a more positive excellence; they have not been approached by any of his countrymen, and one of them, a study of the Dano-Norwegian poetry of the last century, ranks high in the critical literature of all Scandinavia.

Welhaven had the personal attractiveness that marks most great movers of men; his grave and handsome figure, not unallied with a certain arrogance, usually retained a dignified reserve which melted into a geniality all the more charming by contrast, when he found himself in the



circle of his intimate friends. He died October 21, 1873, after a long period of shattered health. In him the critical spirit comes to perfection, as in Wergeland the spontaneous; the latter had much of the flabby mental texture of Coleridge—a soft woollen fabric shot through with gold threads—the former is all cloth of silver. Of the voluminous writings of Wergeland, only his death-bed poems (forming the latter half of the third volume of his collected works) may be read in future times; the sparse words of Welhaven will all be prized and enjoyed. The former will inspire the greatest enthusiasm and the latter the deepest admiration.

An individual who deserves a few moments' attention before we pass on is M. B. Landstad, who was born as long ago as 1802, in a remote cluster of houses just under the North Cape. We regard the little town of Hammerfest as the most hyperborean place in the world, but to young Landstad in his arctic home Hammerfest must have seemed a centre of southern luxury. One needs to have glided all day, as I have done, among the barren creeks and desolate fjords of Finmark, to appreciate the vast expanse of loneliness—a very Deadman's Land—that lay between the lad and civilisation. I wish his poems were better, for the sake of the romance; but in fact he is a rather tame religious poet, and would in himself claim no notice at all, were it not that he has undertaken two great labours which have had a bearing on the poetical life of the country. From 1834 to 1848 Landstad was pastor of a parish in the heart of Thelemarken, the wildest of all

the provinces of Norway, and he occupied his spare time in collecting as many as he could of the national songs (*Folkeviser*) which still float in the memories of the peasantry. He published a very large collection, in rather a tasteless form, in 1853; but though the work is too clumsy for common use, it has proved of the greatest service as a storehouse for more critical students of the old Norse language. Too much praise, however, must not be accorded to him even on this score, for Asbjørnsen and Moe were in the field ten years earlier, as we shall see farther on in our history. Another great labour of Landstad's was the compilation of a psalm-book for general use in churches, to supersede the various old collections. Our arctic poet, whose fault ever was to be too diffuse, produced his psalm-book, at Government expense, on a scale so huge as to be quite unfit for the use for which it was intended. Still, like the *Folkeviser*, it forms a useful storehouse for others to collect what is valuable from, and still continues to be the standard edition of religious poetry.

In Cowley's comedy of *The Guardian* a poet is introduced, who is so miserable that everything he sees reminds him of Niobe in tears. "That Niobe, Doggrell, you have used worse than Phœbus did. Not a dog looks melancholy but he's compared to Niobe." So it is with the person that meets us next upon our pilgrimage. Nothing ever cheers or enlivens him; at the slightest excitement he falls into floods of genteel grief, and when other people are laughing he is thinking of Niobe.

Andreas Munch, a son of the poet-bishop of Christianssand, was born in 1811, and through a long life has been the author of a great many lyrical and dramatic volumes. After the turmoil of Syttendemai-Poesi and the rage of the great critical controversy, it was rather refreshing to meet with a poet who was never startling or exciting, whose song-life was pitched in a minor key, and whose personality seemed moist with dramatic tears. If he had no great depth of thought, he had at least considerable beauty of metrical form, and was always "in good taste." Andreas Munch basked for a while in universal popularity. He was called "Norway's first skald," but whether first in time or first in merit would seem to be doubtful. It was not till 1846 that he published any work of real importance, and in that year appeared *Den Eensomme* ("The Solitary"), a romance founded on the morbid but fascinating idea of a soul that, folding inward upon itself, ever increasingly shuns the fellowship of mankind, while the agonies of isolation rack it more and more. The scene of the story is laid in modern times, and an additional horror is by that means given to an idea which, though it would hardly have presented itself to any but a sickly mind, is carried out with skill and effect. Shortly upon this followed another prose work of considerable merit—*Billeder fra Nord og Syd* ("Pictures from North and South")—which had a great success. In 1850 he printed *Nye Digte* ("New Poems"), which are the prettiest he produced, and mark the climax of his literary life. The melancholy tone of these poems does not reach

the maudlin, and goes no farther than the shadowy pensiveness of which the Danish Ingemann had set the example. All through life Munch was strongly influenced by the works of Ingemann, whose most consistent scholar he was. Even here, however, we feel that there is want of power and importance; these are only verses of occasion. "Miscellany Poems," as our great-grandfathers called them, the world has seen enough of; it is a grave error for an eminent writer to add to their number.

With the year 1852 begins Munch's period of greatest volubility. It would be a weariness to enumerate his works, but there are two that we must linger over, because of their extreme popularity, and because they are the very first works a novice in Norwegian is likely to meet with; I mean the dramas *Solomon de Caus* and *Lord William Russell*. The first of these was published in 1855, and caused a sensation not only in Scandinavia, but as far as Germany and Holland. De Caus was the man who discovered the power of steam, and who was shut up in a mad-house as a reward for his discovery. There is decidedly a good tragical idea involved in this story, and Munch deserves praise for noticing it. But his treatment of the plot leaves much to be desired, and a religious element is dragged in, which is incongruous and confusing. The poem is fairly good, but when so much has been written about it, praising it to the skies, one is surprised, on a closer inspection, to find it so tame and unreal. Of a better order of writing is *Lord William Russell*, 1857—on the whole, perhaps, the best work

of Andreas Munch's—well-considered, carefully written, and graceful. But there is, even here, little penetration of character, and the worst fault is that the noble figure of Rachel Russell is drawn so timidly and faintly that the true tragical heart of the story is hardly brought before us at all. Lady Russell, it is true, constantly walks the stage, but she weeps and sentimentalises, describes the landscape, and cries, "Fie, bad man!"—does everything, in fact, but show the noble heroism of Russell's wonderful wife. The dialogue is without vigour, but it is purely and gracefully written; and, to give the author his due, the play is a really creditable production, as modern tragedies go. But no one that could read Ibsen would linger over Munch; we are about to introduce a dramatist indeed.

We have still a little way to go before we reach the real founder of the Norwegian drama. We must follow Niobe a little farther. Andreas Munch has continued to the present date to issue small volumes of lyrics in smart succession. Gradually he has lost even the charm of form and expression, and his best admirers are getting weary of him. In truth, he belongs to the class of graceful sentimentalists that Hammond and L. E. L. successively represented with us, and but few of his writings can hope to retain the popular ear. One of his latest labours has been to translate Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* very prettily. Indeed, in pretty writing he is unrivalled.

Andreas Munch fills up the interval of repose between the old political poetry and the new national school. For

all their loud talk about patriotism, Wergeland and the rest had never thought of taking their inspiration from the deep well of national life around them, or from the wealth of old songs and sagas. But everything that was healthy and rich in promise was to come from the inner heart of the nation, and the real future of Norwegian art was to be heralded not by Munch's love-sick sonnets, but by the folk-songs of Moe, the historical dramas of Ibsen, and the peasant romances of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. The man that opened the eyes of students and poets, and heralded this revolution in art, was not a poet himself, but a zoologist—P. C. Asbjørnsen.

This gifted man was born at Christiania in 1812; he early showed that bias for natural history which is so common among his countrymen, and, being of a brisk temperament, has spent most of his life in wandering over shallow seas, dredging and investigating. On this mission he sailed down the Mediterranean Sea, and has spent a long time in exploring the rich fields that lie before a zoologist on the coasts of Norway itself. But some part of every man's life has to be spent on shore, and these months Asbjørnsen dedicated to investigations of a very different kind; he searched among the peasants for stories. Just about that time there was a wide-spread desire to save the remnants of popular legend before it was too late. The Finnish scholars were collecting the Kalewala; the Russians were hunting up those wild songs of which Mr. Ralston has lately given us an English selection; Magyar and Servian poetry was being carefully amassed. It

occurred to Asbjørnsen to do the same with the mythology of Norway. Starting from Bergen, he strolled through the magnificent passes of the Justedal and the Romsdal, drinking in the wild beauty of the scenery till it became part of his being, and gossiping with every peasant he could meet with. When a boatman ferried him across the dark fjord, he would coax a story from him about the spirits that haunt the waters; the postboys had fantastic tales to tell about the trolls and the wood spirits; the old dames around the fire would murmur ancient rites and the horrors of by-gone superstition. When the peasant was shy and would not speak, Asbjørnsen would tell a story himself, and that never failed to break the ice. When he had wandered long enough in the west, he crossed the Dovrefjeld, and explored the valleys of Österdal, lying along the border of Sweden. The results of his labours, and those of the poet Jörgen Moe, were published jointly in 1841, as *Norske Folkeeventyr* ("Norwegian Popular Tales"), a book that made little impression at the time, but which has grown to be one of the bulwarks of Norwegian literature, and which, besides winning for its principal author a European fame, has had a profound influence on the younger poets of our day.

Dr. Jörgen Moe, now Bishop of Christianssand,<sup>1</sup> whom we have just seen helping Asbjørnsen to collect folk-stories, is himself a poet of no mean order. His nature is not active and joyous like that of his associate; he would seem to be one of those diffident and sensitive natures,

<sup>1</sup> Died March 27, 1882.

whose very delicacy prevents their pushing their way successfully into public notice. Violets, for all their ethereal perfume, are easily overlooked, and Jørgen Moe's works are as small, as unassuming, as exquisite as violets. The book he is best known by is a thin volume of poems, brought out in 1851; they have nothing about them to attract particular notice till one falls into the spirit of them, and then one is conscious of a wonderful melody, as of some Ariel out of sight—a sense of perfect, simple expression. The reader is transported to the pine-fringed valleys; he sees the peasants at their daily work, he hears the cry of the waterfalls, and forgets all the humdrum existence that really lies about him. These verses have a power of quiet realism that is strangely refreshing; if any one would know what Norway and its people really are, let them read Moe's little lyrical poems.

The following is far from being the best, but it is one of the most imitable of the collection:—

#### SUMMER EVENING.

Now softly, lightly the evening dies,—  
 Gold-red upon headlands and waves without number,  
 And a soundless silence tenderly lies  
 And rocks all nature to dreamless slumber;  
     Meadow and dingle  
     Reflected, mingle  
 With waves that flash over sand and shingle  
     In one dim light.

Ah ! slim is the fisherman's boat, and yet  
 High on the glittering wave it soars,



The fisherman bends to his laden net,  
 While the girls are hushed at the silent oars.  
     The soft emotion  
     From vale and ocean  
 Has quenched the noise of the day's commotion,  
     And bound it still.

And there stands one girl in a dream, and sighs,  
 While up to the clear warm sky she glances,  
 But full of longing her young thought flies  
     To the Christmas games and the whirling dances ;  
     The deep red blaze  
     Of the evening haze  
 Has thrown sparks farther than we can gaze—  
     She sees afar !

Thou rich and rose-coloured summer night,  
 Thou givest us more than the bright days bring ;  
 O yield to Beauty the best delight,—  
     Let her dream come to her on gentle wing !  
     While her boat caresses  
     The low green nesses,  
 Lay the silver crown on her maiden tresses,  
     As a happy bride !<sup>1</sup>

In 1877 the Bishop of Christianssand issued his works in prose and verse, in two important volumes.

We now reach the name which stands highest among the poets of the new school, a star that is still in the ascendant, and on whom high hopes are built by all who desire the intellectual prosperity of Norway. Henrik Ibsen is a man who, through all difficulties from within and without,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix D.

has slowly lifted himself higher and higher as an artist, and is now in the full swing of literary achievement. But I pass over the details of his career, since they form the entire subject of my next chapter.

Let us turn instead to his great rival and opponent. The name and fame of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson have spread farther over the world's surface than that of any of his countrymen. Though he is still young, his works are admired and eagerly read all over the north of Europe, and are popular in America. It is as a romance-writer that he has met with such unbounded distinction. Who has not read *Arne*, and felt his heart beat faster with sympathy and delight? Who has not been refreshed by the simple story of the *Fisher Girl*? It seemed as though every kind of story-writing had been abundantly tried, and as though a new novel must fall upon somewhat jaded ears. But in Bjørnson we discovered an author who was always simple and yet always enchanting; whose spirit was as masculine as a Viking's, and as pure and tender as a maiden's. Through these little romances there blows a wind as fragrant and refreshing as the odour of the Trondhjem balsam-willows, blown out to sea to welcome the new-comer; and just as this rare scent is the first thing that tells the traveller of Norway, so the purity of Bjørnson's *novelettes* is usually the first thing to attract a foreigner to Norwegian literature.

But it is only with his poems that we have here to do, and we must not be tempted aside into the analysis of his novels. They have, however, this claim on our attention,

that they contain some of the loveliest songs in the language. *Arne*, published in 1858, is particularly rich in these exquisite lyrics, full of a mountain melancholy, a delicate sadness native to the lives of solitary and sequestered persons. In almost all his early poems, Björnson dwells on the vague longing of youth, the hopeless dream of a blue rose in life. Here is one of the lovely songs that Arne sings, rendered as closely as I find it possible :—

“ Through the forest the boy wends all day long,  
For there he has heard such a wonderful song.

He carved him a flute of the willow tree,  
And tried what the tune within it might be.

The tune came out of it sad and gay,  
But while he listened it passed away.

He fell asleep, and once more it sung,  
And over his forehead it lovingly hung.

He thought he would catch it, and wildly woke,  
And the tune in the pale night faded and broke.

‘ O God, my God, take me up to Thee,  
For the tune Thou hast made is consuming me.’

And the Lord God said, ‘ ’Tis a friend divine,  
Though never one hour shalt thou hold it thine.

Yet all other music is poor and thin  
By the side of this which thou never shalt win ! ”<sup>1</sup>

. While in his stories he deals with peasant life, so in his dramas he draws his afflatus from the rich hoard of antique sagas. *Mellem Slagene* ("Between the Battles") was the first of these saga-plays. It is very fine. Two married folk—Halvard and Inga—once deeply in love with one another, begin mutually to tire, and to long, the man for the old wild, fighting life; the woman for her pleasant maiden days with her father. They get entangled in misconceptions, and a reserve creeping in on both sides parts them more and more. "Silence slays more than sharp words do," is the motto of the piece—a motto very suggestive to the undemonstrative people of the North. The two principal figures, and also that of King Sverre, are very keenly drawn. In 1858 there followed *Halte Hulda* ("Lame Hulda"), the story of a girl who has lived to be four-and-twenty, loveless and unloved, full of grief, and physically incapacitated by her lameness, and who suddenly falls into passionate and hopeless affection for a man she meets. Here again we have a dramatic situation, subtly chosen, original, and carefully worked out. *Kong Sverre*, 1861, was the next of these saga-dramas, wherein the King Sverre, who acted a secondary part in *Mellem Slagene*, becomes chief and centre of interest. Much of the latter, however, gathers around the bishop, Nicolaus, one of Björnson's most skilful pieces of figure-painting. *Sigurd Slembe* (1862) closes the list of saga-dramas. The author turned next to modern history, and published in 1864 *Maria Stuart i Skotland* ("Mary Stuart in Scotland"), a piece which unfortunately suggests comparisons

with Vondel, Schiller, and Swinburne; it is written in prose. It could be wished that Björnson had chosen some less hackneyed subject. His next effort was in quite a different line: *De Nygifte* ("The Newly-married Couple"), 1865, is a little prose comedy in high life. The hero, having fallen violently in love with a girl too young to understand his character, finds out too late that she has no notion of the responsibilities of married life, and still prefers her parents to himself. He tries to cure her by wrenching her suddenly from all old associations, and though she is very sullen for a while, he is victorious at last, and wins her love. Björnson has hardly allowed himself enough space in this little drama; the evolution of character is hurried by the shortness of the scenes; but it is nevertheless ably written. In 1869 he published a volume of Songs and Poems.

He now entered upon a second period, the end of which we have not yet seen, and the influence of which has, in my opinion, been extremely injurious to Björnson's reputation and to the literature of his country. He began his violent and jejune experiments in 1870, with the epic poem of *Arnljot Gelline*, written in a jargon so uncouth that it is sometimes almost impossible to comprehend it. In the midst of its eccentricity and barbarism, however, there are certainly fine passages to be found in this poem, which deals with the fall of Olaf the Saint at the battle of Stiklestad. The section, in particular, called "Arnljot's Longing for the Sea," is of a high order of lyric poetry, and worthy of Byron at his best. In 1872 Björnson

tantalised and perplexed his readers with his saga-drama of *Sigurd Jorsalfar*, a mere hasty sketch, with one magnificent scene in which Sigurd the Crusader, unannounced, presents himself, splendid and masculine, like a sea-eagle bathed in sunset colour, with the gold and silk of the East upon him, to Borghild, a noble woman long weary and ashamed with waiting for his love. The rest of the play is hurried and faulty; this single scene is Shakspearian. After a long silence, and much deplorable interference with the political factions of his fatherland, Björnson appeared in 1875 with two satirical comedies—*A Bankruptcy*, a popular piece, in the German taste, and *The Editor*, a powerful but rabid and unjustifiable personal satire. Since then his ineptitudes have culminated in a democratic drama, *The King*, a really monstrous fiasco, unworthy of a poet of high reputation as a work of art, and, politically speaking, beneath discussion. In 1877 he produced a clever, but sickly and chaotic novel, *Magnhild*. He is evidently working out with pain and stress a fresh development of his remarkable genius.

Jonas Lie, whose novels of Norse life at sea rival Björnson's early mountain stories in popularity, has also written, but far less abundantly, in verse. He is indeed the author of a lyrical drama, *Faustina Strozzi*, 1875, which contains, with certain unfortunate irregularities in form and design, some exquisite beauties of detail. He was born in 1833, and first came before the public with a volume of verses as late as 1867. His sea-stories take a very high rank, and his most successful novel, *The Pilot and his*

*Wife*, is perhaps the best sustained and the most accomplished romance that Norway has produced. In 1878 Lie published a curious and ingenious psychological study, *Thomas Ross*, which has not quite the same charm as his simpler stories.

With this writer we will draw our survey of Norwegian poetry to a close. Nothing has been said here about the verse written in the dialect of the peasants, of which the great linguist Ivar Aasen (born in 1813), by moulding with the old Norse, has made a sort of new language. This peasant Norse has had a galvanic life imparted to it by the exertions of its inventor, and a good poet (K. Janson, born in 1841) has been found enthusiastic enough to write exclusively in it. The chief objection to the movement seems to be that it would make Norwegian literature more remote and undecipherable than ever; on the other hand, it is no doubt an advantage that the peasant should understand when he is preached to and written for. The creator of this language of the future, Aasen, is a man of high and versatile genius, and has himself contributed several poems to the new literature. For the rest, its principal cultivators have been Vinje (1818-1870), the author, among other things, of a rather truculent book on English life, and Janson, who is a young writer of considerable activity. But this fancy language lies out of our province; if worth the consideration of Englishmen at all, it should be studied as a branch of philology.

We have now followed the literary life of this young nation for more than half a century. We have seen how

the sudden political wrench, that divided it from its neighbour, gave it power to throw off the Danish influence and strike out a new path for itself. We have seen, too, how bravely, in spite of much weakness, and folly, and extravagance, it succeeded in doing this, and in becoming self-reliant and healthily critical; how, when the age of criticism had sobered and moulded it, it ceased to look outwards for artistic impressions, but sought in its own heart and soul for high and touching themes. The reader who has followed the history of this development will hardly fail to allow that in the circumstances of this thinly-peopled country of magnificent resources, whose youth is unexhausted by the effeminate life of towns, and whose language is still fresh and unrifled, there lies a noble promise of intellectual vigour.

1879.



## *HENRIK IBSEN.*

### I.

THERE is now living at Munich a middle-aged Norwegian gentleman, who walks in and out among the inhabitants of that gay city, observing all things, observed of few, retired, contemplative, unaggressive. Occasionally he sends a roll of MS. off to Copenhagen, and the Danish papers announce that a new poem of Ibsen's is about to appear. This announcement causes more stir than perhaps any other can among literary circles in Scandinavia, and the elegant Swedish journalists point out how graceful an opportunity it would be for the illustrious poet to leave his voluntary exile and return to be smothered in flowers and flowery speeches. Norwegian friends, expressing themselves more tersely, think that the greatest Norse writer ought to come home to live. Still, however, he remains in Germany, surrounded by the nationality least pleasing to his taste, within daily earshot of sentiments inexpressibly repugnant to him, watching, noting, digging deeper and deeper into the dark places of modern life, developing more and more a vast and sinister genius.

A land of dark forests, gloomy waters, barren peaks, inundated by cold sharp airs off Arctic icebergs, a land where Nature must be won with violence, not wooed by

the siren-songs of dream-impulses, Norway is the home of vigorous, ruddy lads and modest maidens, a healthy population, unexhausted and unrestrained. Here a man can open his chest, stride onward upright and sturdy, say out his honest word and be unabashed: here, if anywhere, human nature may hope to find a just development. And out of this young and sturdy nation two writers have arisen who wear laurels on their brows and are smiled on by Apollo. Björnson is well known by this time to many Englishmen: he represents the happy, buoyant side of the life of his fatherland; he is what one would naturally expect a Norwegian author to be—rough, manly, unpolished, a young Titan rejoicing in his animal spirits. Ibsen, on the other hand, is a quite unexpected product of the mountain-lands, a typical modern European, a soul full of doubt and sorrow and unfulfilled desire, piercing downward into the dark, profound, Promethean—a dramatic satirist.

Modern life is a thing too complex and too delicate to bear such satire as thrilled through the fierce old world. In Ezekiel we see the thunders and lightnings of the Lord blasting the beautiful evil body of Aholah; in Juvenal, the iron clank of horse-hoofs is ringing on the marble pavement till, in crushing some wretched debauchee, they mingle his blood with the spilt wine and the vine-wreaths. But neither divine nor human invective of this sort is possible now—it would not cure but kill. Modern satire laughs while it attacks, and takes care that the spear-shaft shall be covered up in roses. Whether it be Ulrich

von Hutten, or Pope, or Voltaire, the same new element of finesse is to be found; and if a Marston rises up as a would-be Juvenal, the world just shrugs its shoulders and forgets him. As the ages bring in their advancements in civilisation and refinement, the rough old satire becomes increasingly impossible, till a namby-pamby generation threatens to loathe it altogether as having "no pity in it." The writings of Ibsen form the last and most polished phase of this slow development, and exhibit a picture of life so perfect in its smiling sarcasm and deliberate anatomy, that one accepts it at once as the distinct portraiture of one of the foremost spirits of an age. Ibsen has many golden arrows in his quiver, and he stands, cold and serene, between the dawn and the darkness, shooting them one by one into the valley below, each truly aimed at some folly, some affectation, in the everyday life we lead.

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, at Skien, a small market town on the sea in the south-east of Norway. He began active life as an apothecary, with a joyous and fermenting brain, a small stock of knowledge and a still smaller stock of money. But poetry and scholarship were dearer to him than all things, and it is easy to conceive that the small world of Skien became intolerable to him. He wrote a tragedy, and met with a Mæcenas who would publish it; and after some delay there appeared at Christiania, in 1850, *Catilina*, a drama in three acts, by Brynjolf Bjarme. Under this uncouth pseudonym a new poet concealed himself, but the public were none the wiser,

and only thirty copies were sold. *Catilina* is the work of a boy; it is marked by all the erotic and revolutionary extravagances usual in the efforts of youths of twenty. The iambic verses are very bad; the writer has evidently read little, and scarcely thought at all, but there is a certain vigour running through it which seduces one into reading it despite one's self. With this precious production under his arm, Ibsen came to the capital in 1851, and began to study at the University. He never attained to a very splendid career—there he began too late for that—but he did fairly well, being well-grounded in Latin. *Catilina* shows that he had read his Sallust well in the old days at Skien. At the University he fell in with a clique of lads of earnest mind and good intelligence, several of whom have made a name in literature; Björnson was there, and Vinje, called the Peasant; Botten-Hansen, the bibliographer; and Frithjof Foss, the novelist. These young contemporaries schemed nothing less than an entire revolution in literature. They began to set about it by founding a newspaper, called, I do not know why, *Andhrimner*, which professed the same critical independence, and shared the same early fate, as the celebrated *Germ* among ourselves. *Andhrimner* was published by Botten-Hansen, Ibsen, and Vinje, and contained nothing but original poetry, criticism, and æsthetics. After a sickly existence of nine months, it went out. Among Ibsen's numerous contributions was a long drama, *Norma, or a Politician's Love*, a most impertinent lampoon on the honourable members of his Majesty's Storting, of which

the first act is said to be in extremely witty and delicate verse. But *Andhrimner* has become a great rarity, a bibliographical prize, and I have never seen it. When it ceased, in 1851, Ibsen was so fortunate as to meet with a gifted man who at once perceived his genius, Ole Bull, the great violinist. At his intercession Ibsen became director of the theatre at Bergen, and held the post till 1857. In 1852 he travelled in Denmark and Germany, met Heiberg, the great poet-critic, at Copenhagen, and came back mightily dissatisfied with Norway and himself. The theatre was a source of constant vexation to him, and during the six years he spent at Bergen his genius seems to have been in some degree under a cloud. He wrote a great deal while he was there, but most of it has been destroyed, and what remains is unworthy of him; he produced two or three plays on his own stage, but would not print or preserve them; one little piece which he did print as a feuilleton to a Bergen paper in 1854 was rather flimsy in texture. In 1857 the younger poet, Björnson, took the direction of the Bergen house, and Ibsen came up to Christiania to direct the National Theatre there. He was now almost thirty years of age, and had not written one great work; it is often the loftiest minds that attain manhood most slowly. May-flies reach perfection in a day and another day sees their extinction, while great souls strengthen themselves in a long-drawn adolescence. But our poet had finished his chrysalis-life at last. For the next seven years he produced several historical dramas of great and increasing merit; but I do not purpose at

present to speak of these, nor of his political or miscellaneous poems, but only of his three great satires in verse. And forthwith let us pass to them.

It was not till 1863 that Ibsen discovered the natural bent of his genius. Until that year no one could tell that he was born to be a satirist. Now, after reading his great later poems, one can perceive traces of that lofty invective, which was to be his final culmination, even in the earlier and purely historical dramas. But when *Kjærlighedens Komædie* ("Love's Comedy"), a satirical play of our own generation, first appeared in Norway, there were very few among the poet's admirers to whom it was not a great surprise to find him to be a master of so entirely new a style. The older pieces, being hewn out of an antique and lovely source, were fittingly robed in terse prose; this, being concerned with the prosaic trivialities of to-day, needed and received all the delicate finish of epigrammatic verse. The original is written in rhyme, but I have translated into blank verse; a rhymed play being a shocking thing to English readers since Dryden's day, whereas it is still a familiar phenomenon in the classic literature of Scandinavia. The scene of *Love's Comedy* is laid in a garden in the suburbs of Christiania, in the summer-time. A Mrs. Halm, a widow, having a large house, takes in lodgers, among whom are Hawk, the hero, and Lind, a theological student. Hawk, a young poet brimming over with revolutionary theories and revolting with his whole soul against the conventionality of the day with regard to amatory and æsthetic matters, has determined to give his life to the destruction

of what is false and sterile in modern society. As it happens, the present moment is opportune for commencing the attack. At Mrs. Halm's there is gathered a congregation of Philistines of all sorts, and love, so-called, is the order of the day. Unsuspicious of his intentions, the various pseudo-lovers sport and intrigue around him in what seems to him an orgy of hideous dulness and impotent conventionality. His scorn is lambent at first, a laughing flame of derision ; but it rises by degrees into a tongue of lashing, scathing fire that bursts all bonds of decorum. The scene opens in the evening, while the party sit about on the grass. Hawk has been asked to sing his last new song, and thus he proclaims the *carpe diem* that is his ideal :—

“ In the sunny orchard-closes,  
While the warblers sing and swing,  
Care not whether blustering Autumn  
Break the promises of Spring ;  
Rose and white the apple-blossom  
Hides you from the sultry sky ;  
Let it flutter, blown and scattered,  
On the meadows by-and-by.

Will you ask about the fruitage  
In the season of the flowers ?  
Will you murmur, will you question,  
Count the run of weary hours ?  
Will you let the scarecrow clapping  
Drown all happy sounds and words ?  
Brothers, there is better music  
In the singing of the birds !

From your heavy laden garden  
 Will you hunt the mellow thrush?  
 He will pay you for protection  
 With his crown-song's liquid "us"!  
 O! but you will win the bargain,  
 Though your fruit be spare and late,  
 For remember, Time is flying,  
 And will shut your garden-gate.

With my living, with my singing,  
 I will tear the hedges down!  
 Sweep the grass and heap the blossom,  
 Let it shrivel, pale and brown!  
 Swing the wicket! Sheep and cattle,  
 Let them graze among the best!  
 I broke off the flowers; what matter  
 Who may revel with the rest!"<sup>1</sup>

This song wakens a good deal of discussion. The ladies are against it on the score of economy; the gentlemen think the idea very good in theory. The first person who rubs against Hawk's susceptibilities is Stiver, a dull clerk, who is engaged in due form to a Miss Magpie, who is present. This Stiver confesses to have written verses.

"*Stiver.* Not now, you know! all that was long ago,—  
 Was when I was a lover.

*Hawk.* Is that past?  
 Is the wine-frenzy of your love slept off?

*Stiver.* Oh! now I am officially engaged,  
 And that is more than being in love, I think!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix F.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix G.



Some one speaks about "next" Spring, and Hawk expresses his hatred of "that wretched word"—

" *Hawk*. It makes the shareholders of pleasure bankrupt !  
If I were only Sultan for an hour,  
A running noose about its coward neck  
Should make it bid the joyous world good-bye !

*Stiver*. What is your quarrel with the hopeful word ?

*Hawk*. This,—that it darkens for us God's fair world !  
In 'our next love' and 'when we marry next,'  
In 'our next mealtime' and in our 'next life,'  
'Tis the anticipation in the word,  
'Tis that that beggars so the sons of Joy,  
That makes our modern life so hard and cold,  
That slays enjoyment in the living Present.  
You have no rest until your shallop strikes  
Against the shingle of the 'next' design,  
And, that accomlisht, there is still a 'next,'  
And so in toil and hurry, toil and pain,  
The years slip by and you slip out of life,—  
God only knows if there is rest beyond.

*Miss Magpie*. How can you talk in that way, Mr. Hawk ?  
My sweetheart must not hear a word you say !  
He's only too eccentric now ! [*To Stiver*] My love !  
Come here a moment !

*Stiver* [*languidly, and stooping to clean his pipe*]. I am coming,  
dear !"<sup>1</sup>

From the prosaic Stiver, for whom engagement has robbed love of its charm, we turn to Lind, who is in all the delicious ecstasy of a passion returned but unproclaimed. Referring to Lind's temporary glamour of poetical

<sup>1</sup> Appendix H.

feeling, Hawk remarks that you can always "stuff a prosing fool"—

"As pitilessly as a Strasburg goose,  
With rhyming nonsense and with rhythmic humbug,  
Until his lights and liver, mind and soul  
(But turn him inside out), are found quite full  
Of lyric fat and lard of rhetoric."

The company, becoming piqued, turn upon him, and charge him with neglecting poetry; they suggest that he should shut himself up in an arbour of roses, and then he is sure to be inspired. He replies that the enjoyment of nature unrestrained prevents the creation of poetry; that the imaginative beauty thrives best in an imprisoned soul.

"Cover my eyeballs with the mould of blindness,  
And I will celebrate the lustrous heavens;  
Or give me for a month, in some grim tower,  
A pang, an anguish, or a giant sorrow,  
And I will sing the jubilee of life;  
Or else, Miss Magpie, give me just a bride!"

They all cry out upon him, Love's blasphemer, for he exclaims that he desires a bride, ~~that~~—he may lose her.

"For in the very Bacchic feast of fortune  
She might be caught into eternity.  
I need a little spiritual athletics:  
Who knows how such a loss might strengthen me!"<sup>2</sup>

At this moment the two sensible people of the drama

<sup>1</sup> Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix J.

interpose—Svanhild, who is the only woman with a soul in the piece, and Guldstad, a sober merchant. Svanhild proposes a high spiritual aim for Hawk ; Guldstad proposes to drive off his “morbid fancies” with a little manual labour. Hawk replies—

“ I’m like a donkey bound between two stalls ;  
The left hand gives me flesh, the right hand spirit ;  
I wonder which ’twere wisest to choose first ! ”

Then is introduced the third pair of pseudo-lovers—the Rev. Mr. Strawman, an uxorious priest with an enormous family, who exemplifies the dullest type of the great parody of love. The description of his early life, romantic wooing, disappointed aims, are most amusingly given in brisk and witty dialogue, Hawk sneering ever more bitterly as the description proceeds. The wooing of Mr. Strawman was most sentimental—

“ He loved her to the tones of his guitar,  
And she responded on the harpsichord,  
And first they lived on credit.”

Among the troop of old and young gathered around him, it is in Lind’s amour only that Hawk can take pleasure. Lind and Anna love one another, and no one but themselves and Hawk have guessed it. Suddenly Hawk is horrified by a suspicion that it is Svanhild that Lind loves. He turns away angry, and sick at heart. True love, reserved, tender, genuine, is not to be found ; the whole world is old and sterile ; all good impulses and hopes

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are dead. This he says to Svanhild when they are alone, and she upbraids him with dreamy insincerity.

*Svan.* Last year the Faith in Syria was menaced;  
Did you go out, a warrior for the Cross?  
Oh! no; on paper you were warm enough,  
And sent a dollar when the 'Church Times' asked it!

[*Hawk walks up and down.*]

Hawk, are you angry?

*Hawk.* No, but I am musing.

See, that is all!

*Svan.* You have two different natures,  
And each unlike—

*Hawk.* Oh yes! I know it well!

*Svan.* What is the reason?

*Hawk.* Reason? That I hate  
To go about with all my soul uncovered,  
And, like good people's love, a common thing,—  
To go about with all my heart's warmth bare,  
As women go about with naked arms!  
You were the only one—you, Svanhild, you—  
I thought so, once—but ah! all that is past—

[*She turns and gazes.*]

You listen——?

*Svan.* To another voice that speaks!  
Hush! every evening when the sun goes down  
A little bird comes flying—do you hear?  
Ah! see, it flits out of the leafy shade—  
Now, can you guess what I believe and hold?  
To every soul that lacks the singing gift  
God sends a little tender bird as friend,—  
For it created and for its own garden!

*Hawk* [*takes up a stone*].

Then if the bird and soul can never meet,

The song is never fluted out elsewhere ?

*Svan.* No, that is true ! But I have found my bird.

I have no gift of tongues, no singer's voice,

But when my bird warbles from its green bower,

A poem seems to well up in my heart,—

But ah ! the poem fades away and dies !

[*Hawk throws the stone. Svanhild screams.*]

Oh God ! you struck it ! Oh ! what have you done ?

Oh ! That was wicked, shameful !

*Hawk* [*passionately agitated*].

Eye for eye,

And tooth for tooth, pure legal justice, Svanhild.

Now no one greets you longer from on high,

And no more gifts come from the land of song.

See, that is my revenge for your ill deed !

*Svan.* For my ill deed ?

*Hawk.*

Yes, yours ! Until this hour

A singing-bird was warbling in my breast.

Ah ! now the bell may chime above them both,

For you have killed it !

*Svan.*

Have I ?

*Hawk.*

Yes, you struck

My young and joyous conquering faith to earth

When you betrothed yourself !”<sup>1</sup>

Then she explains that Anna is really Lind's beloved. Hawk now is interested again in this affair, until Lind declares that he will publish the news, that they may be regularly engaged. Hawk shows this step to be suicidal ; but Lind persists. The new couple are received

<sup>1</sup> Appendix K.

with acclamation by the pseudo-lovers, to Hawk's infinite disgust. He cries to the company—

“ Hurrah ! Miss Magpie, like a trumpet, tells you,  
A brother has been born to you in Amor ! ”

the result being that the new couple are smothered in and nauseated with congratulations. Here is the description of Strawman and his wife—

“ He also was a man of courage once,  
And fought the world to win himself a woman ;  
He sacked the churches of society ;  
His love burst into flower of passionate song !  
Look at him now ! In long funereal robes  
He acts the drama of the Fall of Man !  
And look, that female of gaunt petticoat,  
And twisted shoes, down-trodden at the heel,  
She was the winged maiden, who should lead  
His spirit into fellowship with beauty !  
And what is left of love's pure flame ?—The smoke !—  
Sic transit gloria amoris, Svanhild ! ”<sup>1</sup>

In utter desperation, Hawk proposes to throw everything to the winds, and leave modern society to rot into its grave. The only pure spirit he can find is Svanhild, and he tries to persuade her to revolt with him.

“ We will not, like this trivial congregation,  
Attend the church of dulness any more.  
The aim and scope of individual action  
Is just to stand consistent, true and free.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix L.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix M.

But he expresses too much. Svanhild conceives the idea that he is wooing her only that she may be a means to the attainment of his ideal.

“ You look at me as children on a reed,  
A hollow thing to cut into a flute,  
And pipe upon awhile and throw away.”

They part coldly, and the curtain goes down upon Hawk's boundless depression and dismay.

The second act is a day later in time. On Sunday afternoon a whole troop of friends, all intense Philistines, come down to Mrs. Halm's, and hold what Hawk calls “a Bacchanalian feast of tea and prose.” Lind and Anna are beginning to be weary of their love; now that all the world expects them to be ardent, the charm of the mysterious passion is gone. All the three couples—the fat priest and his spouse, the clerk and Miss Magpie, and those most newly betrothed—become more and more ludicrously dull, and Hawk, waxing more and more angry, mutters—

“ See how they slay the poetry of Love !”

But we must hurry to the close, giving only one out of the exquisite and sparkling scenes. Hawk has gathered every one round him, and each person has mentioned some herb or flower that is like love, and at last it is his turn—

“ *Hawk.* As many heads as fancies ! Very good !  
But all of you have blundered more or less ;  
Each simile is crooked ; now, hear mine,

Then turn and twist it any way you wish!  
 Far in the dreamy East there grows a plant  
 Whose native home is the Sun's Cousin's garden—

*All the Ladies.* Oh! it is tea!

*Hawk.* It is!

*The Ladies.* To think of tea!

*Hawk.* Its home lies far in the Valley of Romance,  
 A thousand miles beyond the wilderness!  
 Fill up my cup! I thank you! Let us hold  
 On tea and love a good tea table talk.

[*They gather round him.*]

It has its home away in Fableland,  
 Alas! and there, too, is the home of Love.  
 Only the children of the Sun, we know,  
 Can cultivate the herb or tend it well,  
 And even so it is with Love, my friends:  
 A drop of sun-blood needs must circulate  
 Through our dull veins, before the passionate Love  
 Can root itself, or shoot and blossom forth.

. . . . .

*Miss Magpie.* But love and love are everywhere the same;  
 Tea has varieties and qualities.

*Mrs. Strawman.* Yes, tea is bad or good or pretty good.

*Anna.* The young green shoots are thought the best of all.

*Svanhild.* That kind is only for the Sun's bright Daughters.

*A Young Lady.* They say that it intoxicates like ether!

*Another.* Fragrant as lotus and as sweet as almond!

*Guldstad.* That kind of import never reaches us!

*Hawk.* I think that in his nature every one  
 Has got a little 'Heavenly Empire' in him  
 Where, on the twigs, a thousand such sweet buds  
 Form under shadow of that falling Wall  
 Of China, bashfulness; where, underneath  
 The shelter of the quaint kiosk, there sigh



A troop of Fancy's little China dolls,  
 Who dream and dream, with damask round their loins,  
 And in their hands a golden tulip-flower.  
 The first-fruits of Love's harvest were for them,  
 And we just have the rubbish and the stalks.

. . . . .

And now the last point of similitude:—  
 See how the hand of culture presses down  
 The 'Heavenly Empire' out in the far East;  
 Its Great Wall moulders and its strength is gone,  
 The last of genuine mandarins is hanged,  
 And foreign devils gather in the crops.  
 Soon the whole thing will merely be a legend,  
 A wonder-story nobody believes:  
 The whole wide world is painted grey on grey,  
 And Wonderland for ever is gone past.  
 But have we Love? Oh! where, oh! where is Love?  
 Nay, Love is also banished out of sight.  
 Let us bow down before the age we live in!  
 Drink, drink in tea to Love discrowned and dead!"<sup>1</sup>

There is intense indignation among the pseudo-lovers, and Hawk is driven out of their society, scarcely saved from the fate of Orpheus. Svanhild comes out to him, and for a little while they enjoy the exquisite pleasure of true and honest love. But, to hasten to the end, Hawk discovers that marriage would destroy the bloom and beauty of this sweet passion. He dreads a time when Svanhild will no longer inspire and glorify him, and the poem ends in a most tragical manner by the separation for ever of the only two hearts strong enough

<sup>1</sup> Appendix N.

to shake off the trammels of conventionality. The Age weighs too heavily upon even them, and, to spare themselves future agony, they tear themselves apart while the bond is still fresh and tender between them.

The whole poem—its very title of *Love's Comedy*—is a piece of elaborate irony. We may believe that it is rather Svanhild than the extravagant Hawk who speaks the poet's mind. It is impossible to express in brief quotation the perfection of faultless verse, the epigrammatic lancet-thrusts of wit, the boundless riot of mirth, that make a lyrical saturnalia in this astonishing drama. A complete translation alone could give a shadow of the force of the original.

In 1864 Ibsen left Norway, and, as far as I know, has only once re-entered it. For a long while he was domiciled in Rome, and while there he wrote the book which has popularised his name most thoroughly. It seemed as though the poetical genius in him expanded and developed in the intellectual atmosphere of Rome. It is not that *Brand* is more harmonious in conception than the earlier works—for let it be distinctly stated, Ibsen never attains to repose or perfect harmony—but the scope was larger, the aim more Titanic, the moral and mental horizon wider than ever before. Brand, the hero of the book, is a priest in the Norwegian Church; the temper of his mind is earnest to the point of fanaticism, consistent beyond the limits of tenderness and humanity. He will have all or nothing, no Sapphira-dividings or Ananias-equivocations—the whole heart must be given or all is

void. He is sent for to attend a dying man, but in order to reach him he must cross the raging Fjord in a small boat. So high is the storm, that no one dares go with him: but just as he is pushing off alone, Agnes, a young girl of heroic temperament who has been conquered by his intensity, leaps in with him, and they safely row across. Brand becomes priest of the parish, and Agnes, in whose soul he finds everything that his own demands, becomes his wife. In process of time a son is born to him. The physician declares that unless they move to some healthier spot—the parish is a noisome glen that does not see the sun for half the year—the babe must die. Brand, believing that duty obliges him to stay at his post, will not leave it. His child dies, and the mother dies; Brand is left alone. At last his mother comes to live with him, a worldly woman with a frivolous heart; she will not submit to his religious supremacy, and dies unblessed and unannealed. Her property now falls into Brand's hands, and he dedicates it all to the rebuilding of the church. The satire now turns on the life in the village; the portraits of the various officers, schoolmaster, bailiff, and the rest, are incisively and scathingly drawn. All society is reviled for its universal worldliness, laziness, and lukewarmness. At last the church is finished. Brand, with the keys in his hands, stands on the doorstep and harangues the people. His sermon is a philippic of the bitterest sort; all the wormwood of disappointed desire for good, all the burning sense of useless sacrifice, vain offerings of heart and breath to a thankless generation,

all is summed up in a splendid outburst of invective. In the end he throws the keys far out into the river, and flies up the mountain-side away into desolation and solitude.<sup>1</sup> As a piece of artistic work, *Brand* is admirable; a drama of nearly three hundred pages, written in short rhymed lines, sometimes rhyming four or five times, and never flagging in energy or interest, is a wonder in itself. Eight large editions of this book have already been sold—a greater success than any other work of the poet has attained. A very great number of copies were bought in Denmark, where, just now, religious writing is at the height of fashion, and doubtless the subject of *Brand* accounts in some measure for its extraordinary popularity in that country. The verse in which it is written is finished and lovely work of a high lyrical order.

The following song has attained a special popularity throughout Scandinavia :—

“ *Einar.* Agnes, my exquisite butterfly,  
I will catch you sporting and winging;  
I am weaving a net with meshes small,  
And the meshes are my singing.

*Agnes.* If I am a butterfly, tender and small,  
From the heather-bells do not snatch me;  
But since you are a boy, and are fond of a game,  
You may hunt, though you must not catch me.

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<sup>1</sup> The similarity of this plot to that of Sydney Dobell's *Balder*, published twelve years earlier, is worthy of note.

*Einar.* Agnes, my exquisite butterfly,  
The meshes are all spun ready ;  
It will help you nothing to flutter and flap :  
You are caught in the net already.

*Agnes.* That I am a butterfly, bright and young,  
A swinging butterfly, say you ?  
Then ah ! if you catch me under your net,  
Don't crush my wings, I pray you !

*Einar.* No ! I will daintily lift you up,  
And shut you into my breast ;  
There you may shelter the whole of your life,  
Or play, as you love best."<sup>1</sup>

It was among the lemon-groves of Ischia, under the torrid glare of an Italian summer, that Ibsen began his next, and, as I believe, greatest work. There is no trace of the azure munificence of sea and sky in the luxurious and sultry South about *Peer Gynt*; it is the most exclusively Norwegian of his poems in scenery and feeling. Strange that in the "pumice isle," with the crystalline waves of the Mediterranean lapping around him, far removed from home faces and home influences, he could shape into such perfect form a picture of rough Norse life by fjord and fjeld. *Peer Gynt* takes its name from its hero, an idle fellow whose aim is to live his own life, and whose chief characteristics are a knack for story-telling and a dominant passion for lies. It is the converse of *Brand*; for while that drama strove to wake the nation into earnestness by holding up before it an ideal of austere

<sup>1</sup> Appendix O.

but stainless virtue, *Peer Gynt* idealises in the character of its hero the selfishness and mean cunning of the worst of ambitious men. In form, this poem, like the preceding, is written in a variety of lyrical measure, in short rhyming lines; but there is a brilliant audacity, a splendour of tumultuous melody, that *Brand* seldom attained to. Ibsen has written nothing else so sonorous as some of the passages in *Peer Gynt*.

The hero is first introduced to us as playing a rough practical joke on his mother; he is a rude shaggy lad of violent instincts and utter lawlessness of mind. We find him attending a wedding, and, after dancing with the bride, snatching her up and running up the mountain-side with her. Then he leaves her to make her way down again ignominiously. For this ill deed he is outlawed, and lives in the caves of the Dovrefjeld, haunted by strange spirits, harassed by weird sensualities and fierce hallucinations. The atmosphere of this part of the drama is ghostly and wild; the horrible dreams of the great lad are shown as incarnate but shadowy entities. He grows a man among the mountains, and is introduced to the King of the Trolde, who urges him to marry his daughter and settle among them. Under the figure of the Trolde, the party in Norway which demands commercial isolation and monopoly for home products is most acutely satirised. At last *Peer Gynt* slips down to the sea-shore and embarks for America. These events, and many more, take up the first three acts, which almost form a complete poem in themselves; these acts contain little satire, but a humorous and vivid picture

of Norse manners and character. To a foreigner who knows a little of Norway and would fain know more, these acts of *Peer Gynt* are a delicious feast. Through them he is brought face to face with the honest merry peasants, and behind all is a magnificent landscape of mountain, forest, and waterfall.

With the fourth act there is a complete shifting of motive, time, place, and style. We are transported, after a lapse of twenty years, to the coast of Morocco, where Peer Gynt, a most elegant middle-aged gentleman, entertains a select party of friends on the sea-shore. He has been heaping up fortune in America; he has traded "in stockings, Bibles, rum, and rice," but most of all in negro slaves to Carolina and heathen gods to China. In short, he is a full-blown successful humbug, unscrupulous and selfish to the last degree. While he is asleep, his friends run off with his yacht, and are blown up by an explosion into thin air. He is left alone and penniless on the African shore. He crosses the desert and meets with endless adventures: each adventure is a clear-cut jewel of satire. Here is a subtle lampoon on the way in which silly people hail each new boaster as the Man of the Future, and worship the idol themselves have built up. Peer—the bubble, the humbug—appears in an Arab camp, and is received as a manifestation of the divine Muhammad himself. A chorus of girls do homage to him, led on by Anitra, the very type of a hero-hunting woman:—

" *Chorus.*

The Prophet is come !

The Prophet, the Master, the all-providing,

To us, to us, is he come,  
 Over the sand-sea riding !  
 The Prophet, the Master, the never-failing,  
 To us, to us, is he come,  
 Through the sand-sea sailing.  
 Sound the flute and the drum;  
 The Prophet, the Prophet is come !

*Anitra.* His steed was the milk-white flood  
 That streams through the rivers of Paradise ;  
 His hair is fire and stars are his eyes,  
 So bend the knee : Let your heads be bowed !  
 No child of earth can bear  
 His starry face and his flaming hair !  
 Over the desert he came.  
 Out of his breast sprang gold like flame.  
 Before him the land was light,  
 Behind him was night;  
 Behind him went drought and dearth.  
 He, the majestic, is come !  
 Over the desert is come !  
 Robed like a child of earth.  
 Kaaba, Kaaba stands dumb,  
 Forlorn of its lord and light.

*Chorus.* Sound the flute and the drum;  
 The Prophet, the Prophet is come ! " 1

Another episode introduces one of those ill-advised persons who strive to prevent the use of classical Danish in Norway, and substitute for it a barbarous language collected orally from among the peasants—a harsh, shapeless, and unnatural jargon. One of these writers is

<sup>1</sup> Appendix P.



introduced to Peer in Egypt; he is flying westward, seeking for an asylum for his theories. He tries to win Peer Gynt's sympathy thus :—

“ Listen ! In the East afar  
Stands the coast of Malabar.  
Europe like a hungry vulture  
Overpowers the land with culture,  
For the Dutch and Portuguese  
Held the country at their ease.  
Where the natives once held sway,  
Now their chiefs are driven away;  
And the new lords have combined  
In a language to their mind.  
In the olden days long fled,  
Th' Ourang-Outang was lord and head,  
He was chief by wood and flood,  
Snared and slaughtered as he would;  
As the hand of nature shaped,  
So he grinned and so he gaped;  
Unabashed he howled and yelled,  
For the reins of state he held.  
Out alas ! for Progress came,  
And destroyed his name and fame;  
All the monkey-men with ears  
Vanished for four hundred years;  
If we now would preach or teach,  
We must use the help of speech.  
I alone have striven hard  
To become a monkey-bard;  
I have vivified the dream,  
Proved the people's right to scream,  
Screamed myself, and, by inditing,  
Showed its use in folk-song-writing.

Oh ! that I could make men see  
The bliss of being apes like me ! ” <sup>1</sup>

It is said that these lines have had a greater effect in stopping the movement than all denunciations of learned professors and the indignation of philologists.

Between the fourth and fifth acts twenty years more elapse. Peer wins a new fortune in California, and finally comes back to Norway to enjoy it. The opening scene carries us up one of the perilous passages on the Norse coast, a storm meanwhile rising and at last breaking on the ship. All hands are lost save Peer, who finds himself in his fatherland again, but penniless and friendless. Solvejg, a woman who has constantly and unweariedly loved him all his life, receives him into her cottage, and he dies in her arms as she sings a dream-song over him.

*Love's Comedy*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt*, despite their varied plots, form a great satiric trilogy — perhaps for sustained vigour of expression, for affluence of execution, and for brilliance of dialogue, the greatest of modern times. They form at present Ibsen's principal and foremost claim to immortality. Their influence over thought in the North has been boundless, and sooner or later they will win for their author the homage of Europe. He next published a very successful satiric play, *The Young Men's Union*, in 1869. This is a comedy in prose, the scene of which is laid in a little country town, perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Appendix Q.

Skien being meant, to judge by certain hints. The subject-matter is taken from the ordinary political life in the provinces, and a good deal of airy satire is expended on the frivolity and short-sightedness of embryo politicians. The interest centres around a young lawyer, gifted with some brains, no tact, and boundless impudence, who builds up for himself a dream of successful ambition, and has it tumbled about his ears like a house of cards in the fifth act. This young man, Stensgaard, tries to win the sympathy of the lower classes, and especially of the turbulent youth, by denouncing the proprietary class. But by an accident he gets admitted himself into the society of this local aristocracy, and might, if he had a grain of decision or a particle of sound sense, hew out a path from this higher elevation. But he must needs grasp all, and loses everything. He forms a *Forbund* or Union, a collection of young men that meet to drink a health to Freedom, sing odes to Old Norway, and celebrate the 17th of May, the day of the independence of Norway. These absurdities were once a serious weakness to the State, but now they are banished from rational society, and are only cultivated in such crude assemblies as those our poet satirises. But Stensgaard, with shallow cunning, tries to manœuvre for the support of both classes, and as the election times are approaching, he determines to canvas for a place in the Storting. At the same time he urges a love-suit on three ladies at once, or rather by turns. To the least experienced playgoer it will be obvious that this complicated intrigue gives opportunity for plenty of comical incident, and accordingly the young

lawyer builds his castles in the air for awhile till the political and amatory schemes are ripe, and then in a very amusing final scene all his tricks are exposed, and he himself vanishes into thin air. The dialogue is everywhere sprightly, and its limpid flow is seldom interrupted by those metaphysical subtleties which are the poet's too great delight. In the character of Stensgaard, Ibsen is more than half suspected of laughing at his rival Björnson, whose political freaks were, about the time when this play was produced, exciting remark for the first time.

Not a few of the critics of the great poet ventured to hope that he would select for his next work a subject less local than those purely Norwegian scenes which he was accustomed to draw, and which, however brilliantly painted, seemed to the world at large to be of comparatively trivial importance. In 1873 he appeared to respond to this hope in publishing a work of great ambition, the theme of which had certainly a European and a universal interest. This book, originally projected, according to report, as a trilogy, actually consists of two dramas of unusual length, covering together the period intervening between A.D. 351 and A.D. 363—that is, from the adolescence to the death of Julian the Apostate.

The subject undoubtedly is a very momentous and tragical one. It concerns itself with the effect of a single brain to carry into effect a kind of religious Renaissance, in opposition to that form of political Christianity which had just found a firm footing in the whole Roman Empire. All the great tragedies that art has known are engaged

with the struggle of a gifted and noble nature against an invincible force to which it is wholly antipathetic. From Prometheus to Faust the great tragical figures of poetry have rung the changes on this theme. Ibsen has rightly judged that Julian's struggle against Christ, seen in the light of his slight apparent success and final ruin, collects around it ideas fit for a high philosophical tragedy. In effect he has hardly hit as high as he aimed; *Kejser og Galilæer* ("Emperor and Galilean") is a work full of power and interest, studded with lofty passages, but not a complete poem. But before discussing the causes of this partial failure we will briefly analyse the method in which one of the finest minds in Europe has chosen to bring before us the story itself.

The first of the two dramas is entitled *Julian's Apostasy*. The action opens at Constantinople. We are introduced to one of the picturesque, vivid scenes that Ibsen understands so well how to manipulate. It is Easter, and outside the church-doors a great throng of citizens is waiting to see the Emperor Constantius II. go in state to mass. Before he appears, the bystanders, who have in the beginning united in beating a few stray pagans, begin to quarrel among themselves, Manichæans against Donatists, with furious abuse. In this way, at the very opening, the rotten state of doctrine in professing Christendom is laid bare; the chaos of raving schismatics and godless heretics that grouped themselves as Christians in the eyes of men like Julian is made patent to the reader. Constantius, timid, morbid, and moribund, makes

his way through the crowd, accompanied by his courtiers, and amongst them Julian, the friendless kinsman whose parents he has murdered. Julian is rather suggested than sketched as a nervous, intellectual youth, of wavering temperament and almost hysterical excitement of brain. A lad of his own age, a healthy young Cappadocian whom Julian in earlier years has converted to Christianity, comes out of the crowd to greet him. They pass away together, and in their dialogue the poet finds occasion to unveil to us the condition of Julian's mind and soul. He has become conscious that a kind of classic revival is being suggested around him, and he is angry at being kept out of the way of it. He hopes to secure his own tottering faith by arguing with the men who are trying to restore the old philosophy. He accidentally meets the most active of these new teachers, Libanios, who is starting to found a new school at Athens. Julian obtains leave to go to Pergamos, hoping from thence to steal off to Athens, and stand face to face with the dreaded Libanios. In this act Julian is still a Christian, but the self-consciousness of his assertions of faith reveals the tottering basis on which it rests. He is wavering; circumstances and the age are against him, but as yet his difficulties are rather emotional and moral than intellectual.

The second act reveals Julian in the midst of the new school at Athens. He has made a melancholy discovery: "The old beauty is no longer beautiful, and the new truth is no longer true." The efforts of the young apostates to restore the insouciance of classic times has resulted in

mere bestial excess; Aphrodite and Iacchus are gods no longer, and to Julian the Christ also is a god no longer. A new change has come over him. He finds no rest in sceptical science; the new philosophers are ambitious, greedy, impure persons, and yet he cannot return to the fold of Christianity. The old religion rots in its open grave, and the new religion seems to him to be false and cold and timid. Libanios disgusts him; he hears of magical arts practised at Ephesus, very much as we nowadays hear of spirit-rapping, and he starts off in the hope of a new revelation and a new creed.

The next act is in the highest degree theatrical, but there is but little development of purpose. Julian is discovered at Ephesus, under the influence of a new teacher, Maximos the mystic. There is a great magic-scene, in which, to the sound of unseen instruments and under the flicker of resinous torches, a wild ceremony of incantation is gone through. Strange shadows cross the scene; the figures of Cain and of Judas rise to the motions of the wizard's rod; the whole affair is prolonged to an extreme length, and we do not see clearly the poet's purpose. The result, however, is distinct enough. Julian convinces himself that spirits of the upper world have warned him to restore the old Greek Polytheism. At the moment of wildest cerebral excitement, the Emperor's messengers burst in upon him, with the news that Cæsar Gallos, his brother, has been murdered, that Julian is nominated Cæsar, and that the Emperor gives him his sister Helena in marriage.

He reappears in Gaul. After the celebrated victory at Argentoratum, he returns into Lutetia to Helena. A message from Constantius, accompanied by a present of fruit from Italy, reaches the camp at the same time. Helena, who has received him with every display of conjugal affection, eats some peaches which have been carefully poisoned, and rushes on to the scene raving. The passage which follows is as revolting as powerful. English views of propriety scarcely permit me to reproduce the peculiar tenor of the revelations she makes in her delirium. Suffice it to say that she proves her married life to have been a grossly unfaithful one, and that she names as the dearest of her lovers a Christian priest, who, by a not unparalleled fiction, has persuaded her to regard him as an impersonation of the Second Person of the Trinity. In an agony of shame and horror, Julian curses the Galilæan; this uttermost indignity was needed to give him the power of perfect hatred against Christianity. But for the moment there is no time for reflection. His victory has won him the jealousy of the Emperor, and, threatened with the fate of Gallos, he only saves his life by leaping out of the window into the throng of soldiers. His appeal to their gratitude turns the scale violently in his favour; he is elected Emperor, and marches towards Constantinople. The central idea in this act is the moral force which the adultery of his Christian wife and the treachery of the Christian Emperor exert, in concert with circumstances, in driving Julian into active enmity against their faith.

The fifth act is occupied with the march through Italy



The body of Helena, by reason of her purity, forsooth! works miracles, to Julian's infinite disgust. On the other hand, he makes retreat impossible by publicly worshipping Helios, and marches victoriously eastward. So closes *Julian's Apostasy*, having scarcely flagged anywhere in interest and power, and leaving a distinct heroic central figure on the mind. \*

But the second drama, *Julian the Emperor*, from the very outset, is afflicted with a sense of flatness and deadness that the author in vain struggles to throw off. The moment we find Julian crowned at Constantinople he ceases to be an heroic figure at all. The vain effort to revive the Pagan cultus among the masses of the people, the trifling and annoying passages at Antioch, the intellectual meanesses of Julian, the terrible fiascos at Alexandria and Jerusalem, have nothing tragical in them. These long acts of Ibsen's drama are not without importance, but their interest is solely historical, or perhaps philosophical; they are utterly prosaic. The dramatist has been hampered by an overplus of historical and legendary material. No trifle is spared us, even that slight epigram against Apollinarius, 'Ἀνέγγνων ἔγνων κατέγγνων, is dragged in, losing all force in its Norse translation. We find little to praise or blame in the first three acts of this long drama, but when the fatal Persian march commences, the soul of the poet revives. His spirit remembers its august abodes, and Julian's figure recovers something of heroic dignity. It is almost inconceivable that Ibsen has chosen to dwell on the dirty habits of his hero; he has not spared us the

traditional inky fingers, or the vermin-haunted beard. High talk about Helios and the Phrygian Mother consorts but ill with such terrible details. But with the fourth act our interest revives; we forget the importance of the historical Julian in the lofty dreamer and great warrior, who rises to the height of the occasion in the great eastward expedition against Persia. The story is told finely and graphically; we see the baffled and dejected Emperor pushing on unflinchingly, stung by the songs of the Christians, gnawed at heart with the sense of his ill-success against their Master, yet through it all, determined, calm, and resolute. The condition of his mind is illustrated by a dialogue with the mystic Maximos, of which we translate a part—

*“Maximos.* The vine of the world is grown old, and yet you fancy yourself able, as before, to offer raw grapes to those who thirst after new wine.

*Julian.* Ah! my Maximos, who thirsts? Name me one man, outside our intimate circle, who is led by a spiritual enthusiasm. Unfortunate that I am, to be born into such an iron age!

*Maximos.* Blame not the age. Had the age been greater, you had been less. The soul of the world is like a rich man who has countless sons. If he parts his riches equally to all the sons, all are well-to-do, but none rich. But if he leaves them all penniless but one, and leaves all to him, then that one stands rich in a circle of poor men.”

Here we find expressed Julian's hope and his despair. Ever pressing like a weight upon his spirit is the indifference with which the world receives his gift of the new wine. It is the most deadly of his reverses; it is worse a thousand times than the army of King Saporess, worse

even than the untiring zeal of his Christian adversaries. These his persecutions have roused into martyr-heroism and soldered together with brotherly love, but no passionate zeal burns in the dull hearts of the worshippers of Pan and Helios. Yet his one hope and consolation is that in himself all that is godlike centres, that when all foreign opposition is put down, the conscious divinity in himself will blaze out, to the discomfiture of the Galilæans, and, above all, to the spiritual awakening of the Polytheists. Then follows the burning of the ships, and even till the middle of the last act Ibsen contrives to lose again the poet in the religious philosopher. But in describing the last night before the final battle, his genius suddenly takes fire, and he closes the poem in a white-light of imaginative sublimity. By a pool of dark water, in the midst of trees, Julian stands and consults with the faithful Maximos. He clings more vehemently than ever to the belief in his own divinity. He longs to die to become a god; it even flashes over his brain to slip into the dark pool, and take his place at once "at home in the light of the sun and of all the stars." He is haunted by the unendurable vision of the Crucified. Without terror, without remorse, but with maddening hatred and horror, he sees wherever he goes the great figure robed in white stretching its bleeding hands to stop him in his course. In the midst of this weird augury the Persian army bursts at midnight on the camp. In the darkness the armies meet and thunder together; Julian unarmed leaps on horseback, and plunges into the foremost fighting. Through the night his

unscathed figure is seen in the thickest of the battle, but just at daybreak he looks eastward, and there, where other men see only the crimson dawn shooting along the cold sky, Julian in an ecstasy of horror sees the colossal figure of Christ, robed in imperial purple, circled by singing women that string their bows with the light of his hair, storming down the awakened heavens to crush him into nothingness. He turns to plunge again into the battle, but his old foster-brother, Agathon, now becomes a furious fanatic, draws his bow, and wounds him deeply in the side. He falls, crying, "Thou hast conquered, Galilæan!"

Now, to give briefly a notion of the causes that have militated against the positive success of this work. First and foremost, the technical imperfection of its style; it is written from first to last in prose. It is hardly credible that Ibsen, a poet who has distinguished himself above all recent writers by his skill in adapting lyrical and choral measures to dramatic themes, should have deliberately abandoned his instrument when he undertook this tragical study. It is as if Orpheus should travel hellwards without his ivory lyre. Every charm of harmony and plastic art was needed to draw the buried figure of Julian out of the shameful oblivion of the ages. I earnestly trust that no idle words of that garrulous criticism which is only too ready to commend the indiscretions of popular poets will induce him to appear again in so serious a part without his singing-ropes. But more important than this is the failure to support the heroic dignity of the principal character. If Julian does not fill the scene, who can? Not Gregory,

not Basil, who are mere lay-figures; not Maximos, who wanes and waxes with the waxing and waning of his master. But perhaps the ultimate reason of failure is to be found in what lies out of the poet's reach—the inherent quality of the theme. Julian was not the voice of his time; he was an anachronism. In his brief life was exemplified how much can be done by one whole-hearted man in stopping the civilisation of a world, only to rush on with a fiercer current when he is taken out of the way. Julian attempted to restore what had been tried in the balances of history and found wanting; he had nothing new to suggest. The gods of Æschylus had dwindled down to the nymphs of Longus; the "folding-Star of Bethlehem" had glared on them, and they had sickened and fled away. To resuscitate their ghosts was the dream of a morbid scholar, ignorant of the hearts of men, and blind to the deeper significance of all the signs of the times.

I have left myself no space to do more than mention the names of Ibsen's historical and national dramas. The first, *Gildet paa Solhoug* ("The Banquet at Solhoug"), appeared in 1856. This was followed in 1857 by *Fru Inger til Österaad* ("Mistress Inger at Österaad"), a much finer piece, which Ibsen has lately revised and almost rewritten. It has been Ibsen's fortune in life to rise very slowly, like Dryden, into the full exercise of his powers. In each successive drama we find a more ample expression and greater audacity of thought than in the one before it. *Hærmændene paa Helgeland* ("The Warriors at Helgeland") followed, in 1858, with a fresh series of scenes

from old Norse history, given with wonderful vigour and precision. But Ibsen's masterpiece in this kind of writing is *Kongs-Emnerne* ("The Pretenders"), which appeared in 1864. It has for its theme the struggle for the vacant throne of Sverre, in the first half of the thirteenth century. This epoch, the most romantic in saga-history, has been a favourite with the northern poets from Oehlenschläger down to Björnson. In this case the time is chosen which immediately followed the death of King Sverre. A troop of claimants clutched at the falling crown, but two stood out above the rest, and drew the eyes of all men upon them—Hakon Hakönssön and Skule Bardssön. Between these the choice really lay; Hakon was putative son of Sverre, and Skule brother of an earlier king. Ibsen's drama begins with a scene in which all the heads of the nation, gathered in front of Bergen Cathedral, wait for the ordeal of hot iron to decide whether Hakon is truly Sverre's son or no. The ordeal declares in the affirmative, and Hakon, so assured by Heaven, gains perfect confidence in himself and in the justice of his cause, while Skule doubts and hesitates. Thus the key-note of the poet's estimate of each character is struck at once:•Hakon's strength is his calm self-sufficiency, as Skule's weakness is his vacillating self-mistrust. Hakon becomes king, does everything to conciliate Skule, makes him duke, marries his daughter, but to no avail. In Skule there is ever the same fiery craving for equality with Hakon, for the name and right of king. But while Hakon possesses to an eminent degree the good fortune and august bearing of an old-world king, Skule,

as his rival says, "has all the superb gifts of intellect and courage, is made to stand nearest to the king, but never to be king himself." Hakon's great new idea is to make Norway not a kingdom only, but a nation ; to break down provincial feuds, and make the people one and indivisible. How Skule plagiarises this idea, finds it gives him a power over men's hearts that no thought of his own ever gave him, how by its help he rises to brief kingship, through much blood, and falls at last before the innate power of will that makes Hakon king by every right, human and divine, can only be roughly indicated here. The main characters are drawn with great subtlety and finish, and are relieved by the delicate portrait of Queen Margaret, wife and daughter of the rivals, and by that of Bishop Nicolas, a crafty and witty priest, utterly selfish and unprincipled, but devoted to the interests of his Church. The dramatic power displayed in this poem quite raises it out of any mere local interest, and gives it a claim to be judged at a European tribunal.

## HENRIK IBSEN.

### II.

SIXTEEN years have passed away since the preceding study of the early works of Henrik Ibsen was originally published. At the time it appeared, the name of Ibsen was absolutely unrecognised in this country; it is a pleasure to me to know that it was I who first introduced it to English readers—a very poor and inadequate interpreter, but still the first. That name is now widely admired in England, and has long passed beyond any need of emphatic recommendation. All Europe admits that it is one of the greatest in contemporary literature, and by degrees, even here, its possessor is becoming studied and popularised. Among those who have sought to introduce Ibsen to the English public, it is but common justice to give the foremost praise to the eminent dramatic critic, Mr. William Archer.

It is the more convenient to take for granted the work of Henrik Ibsen previous to 1874, because what he has published since that year has been exclusively of a peculiar class, and that a class in which he had scarcely made any previous essays. The political comedy of *De Unges Forbund* ("The Young Men's Union"), which appeared as long ago as 1869, has a little of the character of Ibsen's



later social dramas, but not very much. All the rest of his early work—his astounding *tours de force* in dramatic rhyme, his saga-tragedies, his historical dramas, his lyrics, although in all of these the careful critic traces the elements of his later and more highly developed manner—is distinguished, to a startling degree, from his social prose dramas, by a total difference of form and tone. The work by which we judge him in this chapter is an unbroken series of seven plays, all dealing with contemporary life in Norway, all inspired by the same intensely modern spirit, all rigorously divested of everything ideal, lyrical, or conventional, whether in form or spirit. These seven dramas are, at present, Ibsen's claim to be considered as a European dramatic prose writer of the first class. By the side of their strenuous originality and actuality, the lovely creations of his youth have faded into comparative unimportance. These were in the tradition of poetry; those are either masterpieces of a new sort of writing or they are failures. It is, at the same time, well to point out that in his own country, where his exquisite rhythmical work can be appreciated, his lyrical dramas continue to have a much larger sale than his prose plays.

Ibsen, be it admitted, for the sake of the gentle reader, is not a poet to the taste of every one. The school of critics now flourishing amongst us, to whom what is serious in literature is eminently distasteful, and who claim of modern writing that it should be light, amusing, romantic, and unreal, will find Ibsen much too imposing. The critic who is bored with Tolstoï, who cannot understand

what Howells is aiming at, and who sees nothing but what is "improper" in Guy de Maupassant, will not be able to put up with Ibsen. There is no doubt that he takes his literary analysis and his moral curiosity very "hard." He has no conception of literature as an anodyne, and like all converts, he is a more zealous enemy of æsthetic and formal beauty of literature than those who have never been adepts in touching "the tender stops of various quills." Ibsen's new departure was marked by the rejection of verse as a vehicle. The latest of his historical plays, his *Kejser og Galilæer* ("Emperor and Galilean"), a vast ten-act tragedy as long as Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*, was written in prose, and marks the transition. Ibsen had "grown weary of his long-loved mistress, Rhyme," and from that day to this he has used it only in short copies of verses. The announcement of his complete divorce reached me in a letter from which I will here translate a few words. He had told me of the preparation he was making for a new play—the same which afterwards appeared as *Samfundets Støtter*—and I ventured, with plentiful lack of judgment, as the event proved, to beg that it might be in verse. Dr. Ibsen replied—

"There is one point which I must discuss with you. You think my new drama ought to be written in verse, and that it will gain an advantage if it is. Here I must simply contradict you; for the piece is, as you will find, developed in the most realistic way possible. The illusion I wish to produce is that of truth itself; I want to produce upon the reader the impression that what he is reading is actually taking place before him. If

I were to use verse, I should by so doing be stultifying my own intention and the object which I placed before me. The variety of everyday and unimportant characters, which I have intentionally introduced into the piece, would be effaced (*udviskede*) and blended into one another, if I had allowed them all to converse in a rhythmic movement. We are no longer living in the time of Shakespeare, and among sculptors there is beginning to be a discussion whether statuary ought not to be painted with lively colours. Much can be said for and against such a practice. I myself would not have the Venus of Milos painted, but I would rather see a negro's head carved in black marble than in white. On the whole, my feeling is that literary form ought to be in relation to the amount of ideality which is spread over the representation. My new drama is not, indeed, a tragedy in the old-world signification of the word, but what I have tried to depict in it is human beings, and for that very reason I have not allowed them to talk 'the language of the gods.'"

This severely realistic conception of what dramatic form should be, a conception which sounded oddly at first on the lips of a poet who had written impassioned five-act plays entirely in elaborate rhymed measures, was in strict harmony with the mental and moral tone of the author in this his new departure. Dr. Georg Brandes in his interesting volume, *Det Moderne Gjennembruds Mænd*, has given us some valuable particulars regarding Ibsen's political and philosophical experiences at this crisis of his life. During the Franco-German war, it would seem that his sentiment with regard to life and history underwent a complete revolution. He woke up to see, or to think he

saw, that we were living in the last scene of the last act of a long drama; that all which politics, morals, literature were giving us was but the last and driest crumbs swept up from under the table of eighteenth-century revolution; that "Liberty, equality, and fraternity" was played out as a motto, and had come to mean the direct opposite of what it meant to "the late lamented Guillotine." He saw, or thought he saw, politicians wasting their energies on local and superficial revolution, not perceiving that all things were making ready for a universal revolt of the spirit of men. A few months later, in the following sentences, he anticipated, with a very surprising exactitude, recent utterances of Tolstoi. Ibsen wrote thus to Georg Brandes:—

"The State is the curse of the individual. How has the national strength of Prussia been purchased? By the sinking of the individual in a political and geographical formula. . . . The State must go! That will be a revolution which will find me on its side. Undermine the idea of the State, set up in its place spontaneous action, and the idea that spiritual relationship is the only thing that makes for unity, and you will start the elements of a liberty which will be something worth possessing."

It was in such a mood as this that Ibsen received news of the Paris Commune with extreme disgust, regarding this caricature of his ideal as likely to delay the realisation of his genuine desire through at least a generation. To await the new revolution, as religious mystics await the solemn Second Advent, was now useless. The hope of the immediate future had sunk behind the Seine, and

Ibsen turned from watching the horizon to diagnose the symptoms of that mortal moral disease of which, as it appeared to him, Europe was fast advancing towards social death. The hypocrisy of society and the brutality of personal egotism—these were the principal outward signs of that inward but universal malady beneath which he saw the world sinking. It was with no thought of reforming society, with no zeal of the missionary or the philanthropist, that he started on his new series of studies. He would spend the few years left to him before the political agony of Europe in noting down, with an accuracy hitherto unparalleled, the symptoms of her disorder. But with him always, since 1870, there has remained, pre-eminent among his political convictions, this belief that the State is the natural enemy of the individual. Always an exile from his own country, he had settled in Dresden, rejoicing in the freedom of a small and uninfluential Government. But in 1875, when Saxony became more and more identified with the vaunting glory and greatness of the Empire, he fled again. In a letter to me at that time he says—"I must go. In April I shall flit to Munich, and see if I can settle there for two or three years. I fancy that all spiritual life breathes with greater fulness and comfort there than here in North Germany, where the State and politics have drafted all the strength of the people into their service, and have arrested all genuine interests." Always this bogey of the State, paralysing individual action, driving the poet through the cities of Europe to avoid the iron clangour of its colossal system of wheels.

Such was, briefly, the mood, as a literary artist and as a political moralist, in which Ibsen started upon the creation of his remarkable series of dramas. To enumerate them—and this must now be done—is to enumerate the entire published work of twelve years. Courtied and flattered as he has been, tempted by the results of his immense prosperity to bend to slighter and less arduous work, Ibsen has never, during this long period of final maturity, resigned for a moment his idea of diagnosing, in a series of sternly realistic dramas, the disease of which this poor weary world of ours, according to his theory, is expiring. At present these plays are seven in number, issued in the winters of the years successively named. First came *Samfundets Støtter* ("The Pillars of Society"), in 1877; then *Et Dukkehjem* ("A Doll's House"), in 1879; *Gengangere* ("Ghosts"), in 1881; *En Folkefiende* ("An Enemy of the People"), in 1882; *Vildanden* ("The Wild Duck"), in 1884; *Rosmersholm* (the name of an old manor-house), in 1886; and lastly, *Fruen fra Havet* ("The Lady from the Sea"), in 1888. Some brief description of these seven dramas, all closely related to one another, will give a rough idea, to those who do not read Danish, of a very extraordinary group of literary products.

In *The Pillars of Society* Ibsen published a play which did not at once discover to critical readers the fact that he was making a new departure. In the first place it was a drama of to-day, the scene of which was laid in a little Norwegian sea-side town, and Ibsen had already once, in *De Unges Forbund* ("The Young Men's Union") of 1869,

written a modern political comedy of life in such a part of his native country. In the second place, the piece distinctly recalled, both in form and in substance, Björnson's exceedingly popular satiric drama *En Fallit* ("A Bankruptcy"), which had attracted a great deal of attention in 1875. Looking back at the two plays, it is now difficult to understand what relation it was we thought we saw between them. The interest in Björnson's play has faded, that in Ibsen's has increased; but undoubtedly, at the first production of *The Pillars of Society*, it seemed to be less original than it now seems. Björnson, with his fresh and vivid fancy, ill-regulated zeal for moral health, and uncertain powers of technical dramatic skill, has scarcely held his own with Ibsen of late years. But it is difficult not to believe that the rivalry between these two great poets has been beneficial to the greater of the two, and if I had space, or could hope to hold the interest of the reader in such a discussion, I should like to dwell upon the relation of Björnson's *Leonora* and *The New System* to *A Doll's House*, and the possible influence of Björnson's *A Glove* on *The Wild Duck*. As far as strenuousness of purpose, depth of psychological insight, and freedom from passion are concerned, however, Ibsen appears to me to be as indisputably superior to Björnson as in grace of touch and occasional felicity of expression he is inferior.

A certain local and peculiarly Norwegian species of hypocritical respectability is the main disease treated in *The Pillars of Society*. The pathognomonic sign which

attends this special malady and distinguishes it from all others is the cautious lying silence which holds its tongue so carefully in small social circles, and wraps around its consciousness of guilt garment after garment of false propriety, spurious indignation, and prudent hypocrisy. The hero of the play is Consul Bernick, whose shipbuilding business is the wealthiest and longest-established industry in the town, who is the main "pillar," in fact, upon which society supports itself. He not only acts as a prop to the trade and the finance of the place, but by his studied morality he gives high tone to its social character. The town bristles with his charities and his improvements, and he is the very darling of its respectabilities. There are, however, two shadows, rather than spots, upon the luminous disc of this great moral sun. It is whispered that Dina Dorf, the agreeable young female to whom the consul has so condescendingly given a home in his family, is the daughter of a married woman, a strolling actress, by Johan Tønneson, Mrs. Bernick's younger brother, who was forced, in consequence of this intrigue, to leave for America, robbing the Bernicks of a large sum of money in the act of his departure. It is, moreover, known that Mrs. Bernick's half-sister, Lena Hessel, obstinately persisted in following her nephew to the United States, and has disgraced herself there by lecturing, and even by publishing a successful book. These misfortunes, however, are never mentioned, or mentioned only to call forth sympathy for the irreproachable Bernick.

When the curtain rises on *The Pillars of Society* we are



introduced, in a brilliant succession of scenes, and in a spirit of pure comedy; to the bustle of social and industrial life in the little seaport town. An artisan, who is foreman of the Workmen's Society, is reminded: "You are, first and foremost, foreman in Consul Bernick's wharf. Your first and foremost duty is towards the society which calls itself Consul Bernick's firm, for that is what we all live by." Ladies, the clergy, those townsfolk whose interest it is to get a railway opened to the town, every person, of whatever species, who exists in and on the municipality, are seen to be whirled in the current of Bernick's stupendous egotism, and the smallest critical objection to his authority is parried either by a threat or else by an appeal to do nothing to undermine so invaluable a pillar of the social edifice. Yet with the opening of the second act we learn that this splendid reputation for respectability is all based upon a structure of lies, and, strangely enough, we begin at this point to study Bernick with curiosity. What seemed an insupportable fatuity is seen to be a deep design of cunning hypocrisy, a magnificent *chef-d'œuvre* of egotistical force of purpose. We are present at the development of a moral intrigue far more serious than any of the roseate imbroglios of eighteenth-century comedy. The Scapins and the Mascarilles, whose impudence has descended in forms always wholly conventional, to the common drama of our day, are swallowed up, are lost and buried in this gigantic figure of a knave, before whom the Church and the sex and the commune alike bow down as to a god.

Gradually the edifice of lies comes toppling down like a

house of cards. In the episode of the mother of Dina Dorf it has been Consul Bernick himself, and not Johan Tønneson, who has been the actor, while Johan has really sacrificed himself to shield the consul. The story of the theft is a pure fiction, and on Johan Tønneson's reappearance in Norway the danger breaks out again. Bernick resolves to ship him away again in an untrustworthy vessel, and as he braces himself to the committing of this murder, a torchlight procession of the townsfolk is in the act of approaching his house to congratulate him on his support of public morality. Johan does not, as a matter of fact, start in the leaky ship, but the toils are gathering around the consul, and when the torchlight procession arrives, half in remorse, half in cynicism, he makes a clean breast of all his rogueries. The revelation comes like a thunderbolt on the deputation, and the townsfolk regard the confessions more as eccentricity than anything else. The firm of Bernick & Co. will rule the roast, we feel, as much as ever it did. The air has been cleared; that is all. There has been a moral thunderstorm. The play ends thus—

“*Bernick*.—There is another thing which I have learned in these last days. It is that you women are the real pillars of society.

*Miss Hessel*.—That's a poor lesson to have learned, brother. No! the spirits of truth and liberty, those are the pillars of society.”

The whitewashing of Bernick at the end gives a somewhat conventional termination to this picturesque and

powerful play, one of the most animated in action which the poet has produced. *The Pillars of Society* was still, in measure, a well-manufactured drama of the admired type familiar to managers. Ibsen does not recur again to this type. Henceforth he carries his realism to a much further extent, and aims at giving no more and no less than an accurate diagram of a section of life. During the two years which preceded his next public appearance, he gave great thought and attention to the question of form, and his second social tragi-comedy was a much more serious affair.

No work of Ibsen's, not even his beautiful Puritan opera of *Brand*, has excited so much controversy as *A Doll's House*. This was, no doubt, to a very great extent caused by its novel presentment of the mission of woman in modern society. In the dramas and romances of modern Scandinavia, and especially in those of Ibsen and Björnson, the function of woman had been clearly defined. She was to be the helper, the comforter, the inspirer, the guerdon of man in his struggle towards loftier forms of existence. When man fell on the upward path, woman's hand was to be stretched to raise him; when man went wandering away on ill and savage courses, woman was to wait patiently over her spinning-wheel, ready to welcome and to pardon the returning prodigal; when the eyes of man grew weary in watching for the morning-star, its rays were to flash through the crystal tears of woman.<sup>1</sup> But in *A Doll's House* he confronted his audience with a new conception.

<sup>1</sup> In his early historical tragedy of *The Pretenders* Ibsen had put it :  
"To love, to sacrifice all and to be forgotten—that is woman's saga."

Woman was no longer to be the shadow following man, or if you will, a *skin-leka* attending man, but an independent entity, with purposes and moral functions of her own. Ibsen's favourite theory of the domination of the individual had hitherto been confined to one sex; here he carries it over boldly to the other. The heroine of *A Doll's House*, the puppet in that establishment *pour rire*, is Nora Helmar, the wife of a Christiania barrister. The character is drawn upon childish lines, which often may remind the English reader of Dora in *David Copperfield*. She has, however, passed beyond the Dora stage when the play opens. She is the mother of children, she has been a wife for half-a-dozen years. But the spoiling of injudicious parents has been succeeded by the spoiling of a weak and silly husband. Nora remains childish, irrational, concentrated on tiny cares and empty interests, without self-control or self-respect. Her doctor and her husband have told her not to give way to her passion for "candy" in any of its seductive forms; but she is introduced to us greedily eating macaroons on the sly, and denying that she has touched one when suspicion is aroused.

Here, then, in Nora Helmar, the poet starts with the figure of a woman in whom the results of the dominant will of man, stultifying the powers and gifts of womanhood, are seen in their extreme development. Environed by selfish kindness, petted and spoiled for thirty years of dwarfed existence, this pretty, playful, amiable, and apparently happy little wife is really a tragical victim of masculine egotism. A nature exorbitantly desirous of leaning on a

stronger will has been seized, condemned, absorbed by the natures of her father and husband. She lives in them and by them, without moral instincts of her own, or any law but their pleasure. The result of this weakness—this, as Ibsen conceives, criminal subordination of the individuality—is that when Nora is suddenly placed in a responsible position, when circumstances demand from her a moral judgment, she has none to give; the safety, even the comfort, of the man she loves precede all other considerations, and with a light heart she forges a document to shield her father or to preserve her husband's name. She sacrifices honour for love, her conscience being still in too rudimentary a state to understand that there can be any honour that is distinguishable from love. Thus Dora would have acted, if we can conceive Dora as ever thrown into circumstances which would permit her to use the pens she was so patient in holding. But Nora Helmar has capacities of undeveloped character which make her far more interesting than the, to say the truth, slightly fabulous Dora. Her insipidity, her doll-likeness, come from the incessant repression of her family life. She is buried, as it were, in cotton-wool, swung into artificial sleep by the egotistical fondling of the men on whom she depends for emotional existence. But when once she tears the wrappings away, and leaps from the pillowed hammock of her indolence, she rapidly develops an energy of her own, and the genius of the dramatist is displayed in the rare skill with which he makes us witness the various stages of this awaking. At last, in an extraordinary scene, she declares that she can no longer

live in her doll's house; husband and wife sit down at opposite ends of a table, and argue out the situation in a dialogue which covers sixteen pages, and Nora dashes out into the city, into the night; while the curtain falls as the front door bangs behind her.

The world is always ready to discuss the problem of marriage, and this very fresh and odd version of *L'Ecole des Femmes* excited the greatest possible interest throughout the north of Europe. The close of the play, in particular, was a riddle hard to be deciphered. Nora, it was said, might feel that the only way to develop her own individuality was to leave her husband, but why should she leave her children? The poet evidently held the relation he had described to be such an immoral one, in the deepest and broadest sense, that the only way out of the difficulty was to cut the Gordian knot, children or no children. In almost the very last of Nora's replies, moreover, there is a glimmer of relenting. The most wonderful of wonders may happen, she confesses; the reunion of a developed wife to a reformed husband is not, she hints, beyond the range of what is possible. We are left with the conviction that it rests with him, with Helmar, to allow himself to be led through the fires of affliction to the feet of a Nora who shall no longer be a doll.

Ibsen's dramas have a curious way of containing each the germ of the action of the next. As the relation of Bernick to his wife suggests to us the whole plot of *A Doll's House*, so the horrible incident of the diseased friend of the family, the dissipated and dying Dr. Rank, foreshadows the subject of *Ghosts*. This, or I am very much mistaken, is one of

the most thrilling and amazing works in modern literature. I know nothing to compare with it for sheer moral horror except *Crime et Châtiment*. The ghosts, or revenants, who give their name to this piece, are the results of self-indulgent egotism, of sensual hypocrisy, stalking through the lives of the next generation of men. These are the spectres of the pleasures of the dead, the teeth of the children set on edge by those sour grapes that their fathers ate. The warping of individuality by hereditary weakness, caused by selfish indulgence, is the tragic central idea of the dreadful play of *Ghosts*. It opens with light comedy, but the plot instantly thickens. A wealthy widow, mother of one son, an interesting delicate youth who has chiefly resided in Paris, welcomes that son on his return to be present at the opening of an asylum which had been built in honour of her husband's memory. He, the late Captain Alving, has been a "pillar of society" and of the Church. His wife knows, and always has known, that he was a person of hopelessly dissolute conduct, but her life during their marriage was sacrificed to a skilful concealment of this fact, and since his death she has laboured no less to preserve his reputation unsullied. Some remarks of her son Oswald about the non-matrimonial but yet faithful connections entered into so often by artists and men of letters in France—remarks made to the conventional and shallow Pastor Manders—lead to a discussion in which, after her son has left the room, Mrs. Alving tears the mask from the hypocrisy of her husband's past life and the torture of her own. She relates a certain incident which

finally opened her eyes to her husband's moral incapacity, and made her send her little son away, as a baby, out of such corrupting influences. She has scarcely finished telling this story, which frightens Pastor Manders half out of his wits, when through a door left ajar they hear Oswald repeating the particular offence, and, starting up, Mrs. Alving groans out the word "Ghosts!" Her care has been in vain; the spectre of hereditary vices has revisited her swept and garnished home.

So far, no doubt, Alexander Dumas *fits* or even Sardou would go. But Ibsen, in his daring realism, goes much farther still. The only confidant of Mrs. Alving, in the dreadful guard she kept over the outward respectability of her husband, had been his physician, and the poet, with unparalleled daring, pursues the phantoms into a still lower circle of hell. In her life of long-drawn moral anguish, in the sacrifice of her individuality to hypocritical shams of every kind, the only reality which has escaped the universal taint of falseness has been the mutual love of mother and son. She has separated herself all these years from Oswald, that his young life might be untouched by the moral miasma of his home, but she has kept up close intimacy with him by correspondence, and he loves her warmly. Now he has returned, ignorant of the truth about his father, and devoted to his mother, the latter hopes to enter at last upon a period of rest and happiness, in which she need pretend nothing and endure nothing, but lie at peace watching the growth of Oswald's character. But she notices that he drinks too freely, smokes too much, and



seems always restless and listless. At last he confesses to her that he is never well, that his life is physically ruined, that his nerves and body are a wreck. The evil advances with the play. His brain rapidly softens; in the long and almost intolerably affecting scene with which the play ends his reason flickers out, and the spectator, when the curtain falls, is left uncertain whether his mother will, or will not, indulge his last conscious wish, and cut his senseless second childhood short with a dose of morphia. It is hardly possible, in addressing the prudish English reader, to suggest the real meaning of the whole thing. Ghosts! ghosts! the avenging deities born of the unclean blood that spurtled from the victim of Cronos! How any human creature can see the play acted through without shrieking with mental anguish, I cannot tell. Perhaps the distraction of the scene makes it a little less terrible to witness than to read. As literature, at all events, if anything exists outside Æschylus and Shakspeare more direct in its appeal to the conscience, more solemn, more poignant, than the last act of *Ghosts*, I at least do not know where to look for it.

A storm of ill-will from the press was at first the only welcome which *Ghosts* received. It was not possible that it should be otherwise. Conventional readers were shocked by the theme, and the drastic treatment of the theme; artistic readers could not reconcile themselves to such an outrage upon dramatic tradition. The tide soon turned; the amazing power and originality of the drama, and its place in its author's work, were presently perceived. In the meantime the wash-pot of journalism was poured over

the poet. A year later he took his revenge in the interesting novelette in dialogue—for it really cannot be called a play—named *An Enemy of the People*. Björnson had been saying, with his careless vehemence, “The majority is always right;” Ibsen sardonically answers, “Excuse me, the majority is never right!” The hero of *An Enemy of the People* is a sort of Henrik Ibsen in practical life, a critic who is execrated because he tells the unvarnished truth to unwilling ears. The poet is, if it be possible, less optimistic in this than even in his preceding drama. The situation is this. A certain Dr. Tomas Stockmann has made the fortune of a little Norwegian seaside watering-place, by developing its natural resources, and by creating public baths, which are a centre of popular attraction. This little impoverished community has found, thanks to Dr. Stockmann, that its speculation in the baths has proved to be “a broken hill.” Unhappily, Dr. Stockmann, who is physician and sanitary officer to the town as well as director of the baths, discovers that the drainage system of the place is defective, and that the water is full of impurities. He warns the municipality in vain. To make alterations would frighten away the public and affect, perhaps destroy, the popularity of the watering-place; and besides, there is no other outlet for the drainage of the tan-works of an influential citizen. The municipality determines nothing must be done. Dr. Stockmann then appeals to the newspapers on both sides; they are unanimous that nothing must be printed. He summons a public meeting: it hisses him down and will let nothing be said.

It is at this meeting that they whom he has for so many years sustained and benefited howl at him as "an enemy of the people." He is boycotted, stoned, and driven from the town, merely for saying aloud what every one privately knows to be the truth.

The allegory is transparent, and the play is really a piece of rather violent personal polemic. The story would make an interesting novel; it hardly endures dramatic treatment. The work, however, remains so far dramatically true that Dr. Stockmann is in no personal degree Ibsen himself, or even a mere mouthpiece for his ideas, but represents a type, a temperament, of a very conceivable and consistent kind. He is a Radical so intense that the business of radicalism itself is as hateful to him as any other form of political jugglery. Absolute honesty, at whatever cost; absolute devotion to individuality, no matter who is offended; these are the only rules for conduct that he recognises. Accordingly, while Scandinavian criticism has been almost unanimous in holding that *An Enemy of the People* is below the level of its author's works, and has something provincial and temporary in its evolution, I cannot but hold Dr. Stockmann to be one of the most original, and to me most distinct, of Ibsen's creations. There is a great deal of Count Tolstoi in him, but whether Ibsen knew anything of the personal life and character of the great Russian so long ago as 1882 I cannot tell.

In *An Enemy of the People* the animal spirits of the poet seemed to support him on a high wave of indignant idealism. He declared the majority tame and cowardly

and hypocritical, it is true, but vowed that the good man, even if quite solitary, may find his virtue his own reward, and exult like the sons of the morning. But all this physical glow of battle had faded out when he came to write *The Wild Duck*, a strange, melancholy, and pessimistic drama, almost without a ray of light from end to end. This is a very long play, by far the most extended of the series, and is, on the whole, the least interesting to read, although, like all its author's works, it possesses scenes of a thrilling vivacity. The wild duck which gives its name to the piece is an unhappy bird which is kept in captivity in a garret, and is supposed to be shot at last with a pistol by a morbid little girl. Unfortunately it is herself the little girl is found to have shot, and by no means accidentally. The hero is a most distressing Gregers Werle, a type of the new neurotic class: a weak and bloodless creature, full of half-formed aspirations and half-delirious hopes for the future of humanity. In *The Wild Duck* cynical selfishness is absolutely dominant; it has its own way to the end, and, if I comprehend the undercurrent of the plot at all, the ideal spirit of goodness is the untamed bird in its close and miserable garret, captive to circumstances, and with no hope of escape. There is really not a character in the book that inspires confidence or liking. I confess a preference for the merry cynic, Dr. Relling, with his monstrous set of immoral paradoxes. The photographer, Helling Ekdal, who bullies the wild duck and drives his relatives crazy with his hateful tricks and his manners, is almost beyond what a reader can

bear. I read *The Wild Duck* on deck as I crossed the Atlantic in the winter of its publication, and I shall always identify its gloomy pages with the desolate environment of the dreadful ocean. *The Wild Duck* is not the kind of imaginative literature that Mr. Lang would appear to hanker after. It is not an anodyne by any means; and if it is a medicine, I do not quite understand how the dose is expected to act. There can be no doubt that it is by far the most difficult of Ibsen's dramas for a reader to comprehend. I am told, however, that it is effective enough on the stage.

In *Rosmersholm* Ibsen rose again to the height of his genius. This is no less sad a play than the most mournful of its predecessors, but it labours under no obscurity of motive or sluggishness of story. It is charged to an extraordinary degree with the explosive elements of modern thought and morals, and it is a chain of veritable ethical surprises. It closes, as we shall see, in utter darkness, but in the course of the piece so many flashing threads of hope and love have been introduced that the entire web cannot be pronounced dismal. It is a story of what the French call *une fin de rate*. At the old manor-house of Rosmersholm, the family of Rosmer have lived for generation after generation, conservative, honourable, and reserved. The Rosmers have always been distinguished, they have never been amusing. No Rosmer has ever been known to laugh, and their prestige has spread a kind of anti-hilarious tradition around them. In the neighbourhood of Rosmersholm it has long been considered ungentleman-like to be merry. The last of the

Rosmers, Johannes, formerly priest of the parish remains in the house, its latest representative. His wife, Beate, who long had languished in a melancholy and distracted state, drowned herself just outside the door, in the mill-dam, a little more than a year before the play begins. Yet much earlier than that a poor but extremely clever girl from Finmark, Rebecca West, had entered the household, and gradually had obtained complete moral authority in it. Rebecca West is one of Ibsen's most admirable creations. She is an adventuress, as much as was our other friend of the name, Miss Sharp. But there is a great distinction between the two Beckies. Rebecca West thirsts for power, for influence, for independence, and she is scarcely more scrupulous than Becky Sharp, but intellectually and spiritually she is a very much finer creature. In a certain sense she is beneficent; her instincts are certainly distinguished, and even splendid; had she been completely successful she would have been an exceptionally admired member of society. She comes into the morbid and melancholy environment of the Rosmers with all her warmth of vitality. She is fired with a longing to save and to rehabilitate the family. She sees that Beate is past helping, and she therefore sweeps her away into the mill-dam as fast as she can; she sees that Johannes, with his beautiful mind and delicate, harmonious ideas, can be redeemed if only Beate is got rid of. But with Beate must go the old conservative religion, the old high and dry politics. Johannes Rosmer must free himself from prejudice, as Rebecca has freed herself. After Beate's

suicide things gradually grow more hopeful in the sad old house. Rosmer and Rebecca, always on the footing of friends only, remain together and become more and more attached to one another. Rosmer takes the colour of Rebecca in all things; accepts the radicalism that she, a nameless daughter of the people, delights in; gradually drops the Christianity that she disdains. But meanwhile a strange psychological change has taken place in her own ideas. Passionately in love with Rosmer, it has been her constant disappointment that he, with his old-world honour and his Rosmer timidity, has never suggested any closer relation between them than that of friendship. But as months pass on she catches his sensitive distinction; Anteros takes the place of Eros in her breast, and in her new intensity of spiritualised affection she cannot think otherwise of herself than as Rosmer's friend. Her old work as an adventuress, however, revenges itself; their fair companionship is rudely broken into from without. To prevent the scandal which idle tongues have raised, Rosmer, deeply shocked, offers instant marriage to Rebecca. But in the meanwhile conscience has brought up before her the spectre of Beate, persecuted to her death, and she dares not accept. Rosmer finds that the last of a venerated race cannot with impunity break all the political, moral, and religious traditions of his family. He is solitary in his freedom of mind, and even between Rebecca and himself the demon of doubt has penetrated. At last, after Rebecca has, by a full confession, sacrificed all to recover Rosmer's love, and has not regained it fully, they

arrive at the determination to end their confused and hopeless relations by plunging together into the mill-dam where Beate drowned herself. Their suicide is observed, at the very close of the play, by an old woman from the windows of the manor-house; and the house of Rosmer has fallen. The most obvious of many morals in this striking play is that new faith, modern ideas in ethics and religion, cannot with safety be put into old bottles. Opinions may perforce be altered, but the hereditary tendency remains, paralysing the will.

Ibsen's Christmas gift to his admirers, his new drama of *The Lady from the Sea*, is but a few days old as I write these pages, and my impression of it is still too fresh to be quite fixed. Perhaps the charm of novelty has biassed me, but I think not; I fancy this new work will be admitted to be one of the brightest jewels in the poet's crown. He has never been more daring in his analysis of character, never more brilliant in his evolution of it than here; and there is thrown over the whole play a glamour of romance, of mystery, of landscape-beauty, which has not appeared in Ibsen's work to anything like the same extent since *Peer Gynt*. And, moreover, after so many tragedies, this is a comedy. The title can scarcely be translated, because a *havfrue* is a mermaid, a "sea-lady," and there is an under-meaning in this. It is the old story of the mortal who "left lonely for ever the kings of the sea." In a little coast-town of Norway—very possibly the poet's birthplace, Skien—the district physician. Dr Wangel, being left a widower with



two daughters, thinks he will marry again. But at the mouth of the fjord, in a lighthouse on a desolate skerry, an exquisite girl lives with her father, the keeper. Wangel makes her acquaintance, falls in love with her, and persuades her to marry him. He frankly tells her of his own previous happy marriage, and she confesses it is not the first time she has been wooed. But the alliance is a fortunate one until she loses her firstborn and only child. From that time she becomes gloomy, wayward, and morbid, and though she loves her husband she seems divided from him. She is still to all the town "the lady from the sea," the sea-wife. She pines for the roaring tides, for the splendour and resonance of the unconquerable ocean, and nothing takes the place of the full salt breeze she has abandoned. She bathes every day in the harbour, but she disdains these tame and spiritless waters of the fjord, and declares that they do her no good. She has lived the very life of the sea; her blood has tides in it, is subject to ebb and flow. She has been transplanted too late from her ocean-rock; she pines like a sea-weed in a tank or a petrel in a cage.

But there is more than this to afflict her spirit. The old alliance she hinted at was a betrothal to a nameless man, a Finn, nursed, perhaps, by some storm-gathering witch, mate of a ship, who has exercised an absorbing influence over her. He is a creature of the sea, a sort of impersonation of the waves. She confesses all this to her husband, and tells him that she one day received a letter from this man, summoning her to a rendezvous on a desolate promontory.

When she got there he told her that he had murdered his captain (a godly slaughter, by his own account), and was now flying from justice. He took a ring from her, tied it to one of his own, and flung it out to sea. The result of this enforced betrothal, to which her own will was never a partner, is that she feels ever more and more the sea, embodied in this wild, seafaring Finn, coming between her and her husband. At last, in the play, the Finn returns to claim her, and it is not until her husband leaves her perfectly free to choose between the two men, and liberates her individual responsibility, that the morbid charm is broken, and she rapturously selects to remain with her husband, while the merman goes desperately down into his waters. It is impossible here to give the smallest idea of the imagination, subtlety, and wit concentrated in carrying out this curious story. *The Lady from the Sea* is connected with the previous plays by its emphatic defence of individuality and its statement of the imperative necessity of developing it; but the tone is quite unusually sunny, and without a tinge of pessimism. It is in some respects the reverse of *Rosmersholm*; the bitterness of restrained and baulked individuality, which ends in death, being contrasted with the sweetness of emancipated and gratified individuality, which leads to health and peace.

Here must be drawn to a close this brief and imperfect sketch of the great Norwegian poet's seven social dramas. I have spoken of them merely from the literary side; much could and should be said of them from the theatrical. It is easy to be led away into extravagant praise of what

is comparatively little known. Perhaps better-equipped critics than myself, if they read Danish, would say that they found Ibsen occasionally provincial, sometimes obscure, often fantastic and enigmatical. Those to whom the most modern spirit in literature is distasteful, who see nothing but the stitches of the canvas in the vast pictures of Tolstoi, would reject Ibsen, or would hark back to his old sweet, flute-like lyrics. But others, who believe that literature is alive, and must progress over untrodden ground with unfamiliar steps, will recognise a singular greatness in this series of social dramas, and will not grudge a place for Henrik Ibsen among the foremost European writers of the nineteenth century.

1889.

## *THE LOFODEN ISLANDS.*

AMONG the thousands who throng to the Continent for refreshment and adventure, how few leave the great southward-streaming mass, and seek the desolate grandeur of those countries which lie north of our own land! Of those who do diverge, the great majority are sportsmen, bent on pitiless raids against salmon and grouse. It is strange that the noblest coast scenery in Europe should be practically unknown to so ubiquitous a people as we are: but so it is: and as long as the thirst for summer climates remains in us, the world's winter-garden will be little visited. It is the old story: the Northmen yearn after the Nibelungen treasure in the South.

Doubtless, for us who are supposed to shiver in perennial fog, this tropical idolatry is right and wise. With all the passion of Rosicrucian philosophers, we worship the unfamiliar Sun-god, and transport ourselves to Italy or Egypt to find him. But what if he have a hyperborean shrine—a place of fleeting visit in the far North, where for a while he never forsakes the heavens, but in serene beauty gathers his cloud-robcs hourly about him, and is lord of midnight as of mid-day? Shall we not seek him there, and be rewarded perchance by such manifestations of violet and scarlet and dim green, of scathing white

light, and deepest purple shadow, as his languorous votaries of the South knew nothing of?

With such persuasive hints, I would lead the reader to the subject of this chapter. I imagine to most minds the Lofoden Islands are associated with little except school-book legends of the Maelström, and perhaps the undesirable savour of cod-liver oil. With some they have a shadowy suggestion of iron-bound rocks, full of danger and horror, repulsive and sterile, and past the limit of civilisation. So little has been written about them, and that little is so inadequate, that I cannot wonder at the indifference to their existence which prevails. With the exception of a valuable paper by Mr. Bonney, that appeared some time back in the *Alpine Journal*, I know of no contribution to geographical literature which treats of the group in any detail; and that paper, both from the narrow circulation of the periodical, and also from the limited district of which it treats, cannot have had that influence which its merit and the subject deserve.

The Lofoden Islands, which I visited in 1871, are an archipelago lying off the Arctic coast of Norway. Although in the same latitude as Central Greenland, Siberia, and Boothia Felix, they enjoy, in common with all the outer coast of Scandinavia, a comparatively mild climate; even in the severest winters their harbours are not frozen. The group extends at an acute angle to the mainland for about one hundred and forty miles, north-east and south-west. In shape they seem on the map like a great wedge thrust out into the Atlantic, the point

being the desolate rock of Röst, the most southerly of the islands; but this wedge is not solid: the centre is occupied by a sea-lake, which communicates by many channels with the ocean. As all the islands are mountainous, and of most fantastic forms, it can be imagined that this peculiar conformation leads to an endless panorama of singular and eccentric views. The largest of the Lofodens is Hindö, which forms the base of the wedge; north of this runs the long oval isle of Andö; to the west lies Langö, whose rugged coast has been torn and fretted by the ocean into the most intricate confusion of outline; the central lake has for its centre Ulvö—thus the heart of the whole group; and from the south of Hindö run in succession towards the south-west, Ost Vaagö, Vest Vaagö, Flakstadö, Moskenæsö, Værö, and little ultimate Röst. All these, and several minor satellites also, are inhabited by scattered families of fishermen. There is no town, scarcely a village; it is but a scanty population so barren and wild a land will support.

But quiet and noiseless as the shores are when the traveller sees them in their summer rest, they are busy enough, and full of animation, in the months of March and April. As soon as the tedious sunless winter has passed away, the peculiar Norwegian boats, standing high in the water, with prow and stern alike curved upwards, begin to crowd into the Lofoden harbours from all parts of the vast Scandinavian coast. It is the never-failing harvest of codfish that they seek. Year after year in the early spring, usually about February, the waters around

these islands are darkened with innumerable multitudes of cod. They are unaccountably local in these visitations. I was assured they had never been known to extend farther south than Værö, at the extremity of the group. The number of boats collected has been estimated at 3000; and as each contains on an average five men, the population of the Lofodens in March must be very considerable. Unfortunately for these "toilers of the sea," the early spring is a season of stormy weather and tumultuous seas: when the wind is blowing from the north-west or from the south-west, they are especially exposed to danger; when in the former quarter the sudden gusts down the narrow channel are overwhelming, and when in the latter the waves are beaten against the violent current always rushing down the Vest Fjord from its narrow apex. The centre of the busy trade in fish is Henningsvær, a little collection of huts perched on the rocks under the precipitous flanks of Vaagekallen, the great mountain of Ost Vaagö. I was assured that in April, when the fish is all brought to shore, and the operations of gutting and cleaning begin, the scene on the shore becomes more strange than delightful. The disgusting labours which complete the great herring season in our own Hebrides are utterly outdone by the Norse cod-fishers. Men, women, and children cluster on the shore, busily engaged in their filthy work, and steeped to the eyes in blood and scales and entrails: at last the rocks themselves are slippery with the reeking refuse: one can scarcely walk among it; and such a smell arises as it would defy the rest of Europe to

equal. The fish is then spread on the rocks to dry, and eventually piled in stacks along the shore: in this state it is known as klip-fish. Some is split and fastened by pegs to long rods, and allowed to flap in the wind till it dries to the consistence of leather: it is then called stock-fish. Before midsummer, flotillas of the swift boats called jagter gather again to the Lofodens, and bear away for exportation to Spain and Italy the dried results of the spring labour. Bergen is the great emporium for this trade. The other industry of the islands is the extraction of "cod-liver oil": the livers of all kinds of fish supply this medicine, those of sharks being peculiarly esteemed. Along the low rocks, and around the houses, we find great cauldrons in which these painfully odorous livers are being slowly stewed: a heavy steam arises and the oily smell spreads far and wide. But this is not a feature peculiar to the Lofodens: all over the coast of Finmark the shores reek with this flavour of cod-liver oil.

It is a matter of regret to me, in my functions of apologist for these islands, that truth obliges me to raze to the ground with ruthless hand the romantic fabric of fable that has surrounded one of them from time immemorial. The Maelström, the terrific whirlpool that

" Whirled to death the roaring whale,"

that sucked the largest ships into its monstrous vortex, and thundered so loudly that, as Purchas tells us in his veracious *Pilgrimage*, the rings on the doors of houses ten miles off shook at the sound of it—this wonder of the world must,



alas! retire to that limbo where the myths of old credulity gather, in a motley and fantastic array. There is no such whirlpool as Pontoppidan and Purchas describe. The site of the fabulous Maelström is put by the former writer between Moskenæsø and the lofty isolated rock of Mosken. This passage is at the present day called Moskøström, and is one of those narrow straits, so common on the Norwegian coast, where the current of water sets with such persistent force in one direction, that when the tide or an adverse wind meets it, a great agitation of the surface takes place. I have myself seen, on one of the narrow sounds, the tide meet the current with such violence as to raise a little hissing wall across the water, which gave out a loud noise. This was in the calmest of weather; and it is easy to believe that such a phenomenon occurring during a storm, or when the sea was violently disturbed, would cause small boats passing over the spot to be in great peril, and might even suddenly swamp them. Some such disaster, observed from the shore, and exaggerated by the terror of the beholder, doubtless gave rise to the prodigious legends of the Maelström. Such a catastrophe took place, I was informed, not long since, on the Salten Fjord, where there is an eddy more deserving the name of whirlpool than any in the Lofodens.

The legendary importance of the Maelström, as a kind of wonder of the world, led to the frequent mention of the Lofodens by the versifiers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But a specially interesting example of this kind connects with our islands the name of a most extraordinary

personage, Bishop Anders Arrebo, the father of modern Scandinavian poetry. This great genius, whose sensuous and fiery nature contended in vain against the social laws of his time, and whose verse remains as a monument of broken hopes and wasted powers, was born at Æræskjöbing, in Denmark, in 1587, the year that Shakspeare came up to London. In 1618 his brilliant parts had already been rewarded by the bishopric of Thronthjem, in Norway, from which he was ejected in 1622, for too much love of songs and stringed instruments, for amorous discourse, and for too copious joviality at weddings and junketings. The offence seems to have been venial, the disgrace was ruinous; and Arrebo returned from his brief stay in Norway a broken and dejected man. He died in 1637, leaving his *magnum opus*, his didactic epic of the *Hexæmeron*, still unprinted. It saw the light in 1661. Arrebo was a student and disciple of Ronsard and Du Bartas, and his writings partake of the universal affectation that stains the European poetry of his time, but they share also the love of physical beauty and the joyous naturalism of that rich age of fecundity and liberty. It was during his unlucky stay in Norway that he is believed to have composed the *Hexæmeron*, which contains many passages describing Norwegian scenery. That which deals with the Maelström may be worth citing:—

“ In Lofod far to north on Norway’s distant shore,  
 A flood is found that hath no like the wide world o’er,  
 Entitled Moske-flood, from that high Mosker rock  
 Round which in seemly rings the obsequious waters flock;

When this with hasty zeal performs the moon's designs,  
 If any man comes near, the world he straight resigns;  
 In spring its billows rear like other mountains high,  
 But through their sides we see the sun, the earth's bright eye;  
 Then, if the wind should rise against the flood's wild way,  
 Two heroes rush and meet in crash of war's array;  
 Then tremble land and house, then doors and windows rattle,  
 The earth is fain to cleave before that monstrous battle;  
 The vast and magic whale dares not its breach essay,  
 But turns in fear to flight, and roaring speeds away."<sup>1</sup>

After more description in the same grandiose style, Arrebo proceeds to propound a theory of his own, which was universally received for at least a century, and which made the poet more famous than the best of his verses. It runs thus :—

“ Now my belief is this : that underneath the sea  
 A belt of lofty rocks is forged immutably,  
 Which hath an entrance, but is solid stone elsewhere,  
 And in the centre sends a peak high up to air.  
 When now the flood is come, with angry voice it calls,  
 And rushes inward like a thousand waterfalls,  
 And can no exit find to rule its rugged shock,  
 So madly whirls around the lofty central rock,  
 And rumbles like a quern when man doth grind therein.”<sup>2</sup>

Ten years after the death of Arrebo there was born at North Herö, on the Arctic coast of Norway, a man who was destined to give considerable literary prominence to the Lofodens. This was Petter Dass, son of a certain

<sup>1</sup> Appendix R.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix S.

Peter Dundas, a Scotchman of Dundee, who came over to Norway in 1635. This man, who was an influential ecclesiastic in the province of Nordland, composed, between 1678 and 1692, a long itinerary in verse, somewhat in the fashion of Drayton's *Polyolbion*, entitled *Nordlands Trompet* ("The Trumpet of Nordland"). This poem—if poem it can be called—has enjoyed since the lifetime of its author an uninterrupted popularity, which it owes rather to its lucid and sensible style, its humour and its nimble versification, than to fancy or imagination—of which it is devoid. A long canto in it is devoted to the Lofodens, much of which unfortunately is taken up with describing, with far less beauty of language than Arrebo had employed, the Maelström. We learn, however, that in Dass's time the principal Lofoden village stood on Skraaven, a small island now almost desolate. From Petter Dass's language, it seems to me almost certain that he visited the Lofodens, and lodged at Skraaven, and also at a fishing station on Vaagö, of which he gives a minute and curious description.

Until lately the topography of the islands was in a very unsettled state. The name of the group begins to appear on maps of North Europe about the year 1600; but for a century and a half there is no sign to show that geographers were at all aware of the real position of the islands. In Pontoppidan's map the right point on the coast is at last fixed, but the oval smooth pieces of land, at a great distance from one another, which adorn the coast of Finmark on his chart, are a sadly inaccurate realisation of these firmly

compacted and fantastically-shaped Lofodens. Only within the last few years has the patient survey of the Norwegian Admiralty presented us with a minute and exact chart of the coast, and the sea-line may now be considered as accurately laid down. But with the interior of the islands it is not so; they consist of inaccessible crags, dreary morasses, and impenetrable snow-fields. The Lofoden islander prizes the sea-shore, for it feeds and enriches him; and the fringe of rich pasture which smiles along it, for it preserves his cattle; but the land which lies behind these is an unknown wilderness to him: if he penetrates it, it is to destroy the insolent eagles that snap up stray lambs, or to seek some idle kid that has strayed beyond the flock. Hence it is very difficult to find names for the peaks that bristle on the horizon or tower above the valleys; in many cases they have no names, in many more these names have found their way into no printed maps. It was an object with me to fix on the true appellations of these magnificent mountains, and I was in many cases enabled, through the courtesy of the people and through patient collation of reports, to increase the amount of information in this respect. It must be remembered that many of the names given were taken down from oral statement, and that the spelling must in some cases be phonetic.

The only key to this enchanted palace of the Oceanides is, for ordinary travellers, the weekly steamer from Trondhjem. This invaluable vessel brings the voyager, after a somewhat weary journey through an endless multitude of low, slippery, grey islets and tame hills, to the

Arctic Circle. Another day through scenery which at that point becomes highly eccentric and interesting, and in some places grand, brings him to Bodö. This depressing village is London and Liverpool in one for the inhabitants of our islands: every luxury, from a watch to a piano, from a box of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits to a pig, must be brought from Bodö. After a long stoppage here the steamer passes on up the coast some twenty miles, to a strange place called Grytö, a labyrinth of slimy rocks just high enough to hide the horizon. From this the boat emerges through a tortuous and perilous sound, and is at once in the great Vest Fjord. Forty miles ahead in one unbroken line rise the sharp mountains of the Lofodens, and without swerving a point the steamer glides west-north-west into the very centre of the great wall. If the traveller visit the islands in summer, and make the passage across the Vest Fjord at midnight, as he is almost sure to do, the scene, provided the air be clear and dry, will be gorgeous. In the weird Arctic midnight, with a calm sea shimmering before the bows, and all things clothed in that cold yellow lustre, deepening to amber and gold behind the great blue mountains, which is so strange a characteristic of the sun at midnight, the scene is wonderfully impressive. As the steamer proceeds, making for Balstad, on the south-west corner of Vest Vaagö, Flakstadö and Moskenæsö lie somewhat to our left; and perchance, if the eye is very keen, far away in the same direction it may detect the little solitary rock of Værö, and still farther Röst itself, our *ultima Thule*. The

southern range of the Lofodens has been compared to a vertebrated skeleton, and the simile is vastly well chosen, for the isles taper off to a minute tail, and the channels that run between them are so narrow and fit the outline so exactly that they appear like joints. Seen from the Vest Fjord, the whole looks like one vast land, undivided. Higher and higher on the primrose-coloured sky the dark peaks rise as we approach our haven. And now the hills of Moskenæsö assume definite shape; the two central points rising side by side are Guld tind and Reinebring, the former being the southern one. For an account, the only one I know of Moskenæsö, I can refer the reader to the *Reise durch Norwegen* of Herr C. F. Lessing, published in 1831 at Berlin; a scarce book, I believe. Herr Lessing was an enterprising naturalist who visited Værö, Moskenæsö, and Vest Vaagö, and wrote an entertaining chapter about them in his excellent little book. The mountains of Moskenæsö are not very lofty, but the island is inaccessible, the shores being so steep and the outline so indented by the sea that it is necessary to take a boat from haven to haven; one cannot pass by land. The highest mountain of Flakstadö, the precipitous Napstind, is on the northern extremity of that island, and hidden from us by the projecting promontories of Vaagö; but the lofty hills very slightly to our left belong to this island. Even while we speak, we glide between half-submerged rocks and rounded islets crowded with sea-birds into the bay of Balstad, and the Lofodens are around us! The hour is that one of glamour in these Arctic summers

when the day is but a few hours old, and the golden sheen of midnight has given way to the strong chiaroscuro of sunrise. Above our heads rises the mountain Skottind, and we perceive how strange is the land we have arrived in ; no longer the rounded hills of the mainland, no more any conventional mountain-forms and shapes in any wise familiar. Skottind soars into the clouds one vast cliff of dark rock split across now and then with a sharp crevasse, above which rises another wall of cliff, and so on to the summit, where thin spires and sharp pinnacles, clear-cut against the sky, complete the mighty peak. This is characteristic of all the mountains of this southern and grandest range : especially unique and perplexing is the thin look of the extreme summit ; apparently the ridge is as sharp and narrow as a notched razor ; no signs of the receding of the edge are to be seen. All these points are inaccessible on one side ; from the interior it might be possible to reach the top of some of them, and sublime would be the view so gained. At present, this chilly July morning, Skottind rises a wall of darkest indigo-blue between the sun and our faces ; about its horns the heavy tissue of clouds is shot through with brilliant white light of sunrise, and the fainter wreaths of vapour, delicately tinged with rose-colour and orange, pause before they rise and flee away over the awakened heavens. As for Balstad itself, it is a cluster of wooden houses painted grey and green, or deeply stained with red ochre, scattered about on a frightfully rugged platform of rocks, so uneven that I cannot think a square yard of earth or tolerably flat rock



could be found anywhere. Some of the houses are built on the outlying islets, treacherous low reefs on which the grey sea creeps and shows his ominous white teeth. Such places seem to promise certain destruction in the first storm, but the cottages survive, and the bay certainly is very sheltered.

Leaving Balstad, the steamer coasts along the shores of Vest Vaagö. The twin peaks that appeared from the middle of Vest Fjord as the highest land in this island lie on the northern coast, and are now far out of sight; they are known under the collective name of Himmelstinder—a poetic and suggestive title. It may be well to point out that “tind” is equivalent to needle, spitz, and is descriptive of the pinnacle-character of the mountain. Himmelstind was ascended by Herr Lessing, who crossed over to it from Buxnæs, and bravely ascended, in spite of pouring rain and the derisive remarks of the natives: his account of the adventure is highly humorous. We pursue our voyage through an infinite multitude of sterile rocks and under fine stormy crags till we reach the mouth of the broad Gimsöström, the gulf that divides us from Ost Vaagö. Here the colossal precipices of Vaagekallen come into sight, the sublimest, though not the loftiest, of all the Lofoden mountains. This stupendous mass occupies the south-west extremity of Ost Vaagö, and is almost always shrouded in cloud; the snow lies in patches about its ravines, but most of its summit is too sheer for snow to rest on or any herb to grow. Vaagekallen is the beacon towards which the fisher, laden with finny spoils, wearily steers at

fall of day ; for under its spurs, on a group of islets in the sound, is built the village of Henningsvær, the most important of all fishing stations, and a flourishing little place. It has a lighthouse also, the largest on this coast. A little farther on we pass the quaint church of Vaagen—Kirkevaag, as the inhabitants call it—built, like all Northern churches, of wood, and painted dark brown. Here we find the only trace of historic importance that Lofoden can boast, I believe ; for it was from Kirkevaag that that enthusiast Hans Egede, led by devoted love for the souls of men, went in 1721 to preach the gospel to the desolate savages of Greenland.

We pass on through crowds of eider-ducks and terns and cormorants to Svolvær, a prominent station on Ost Vaagö. The entrance to this harbour is through a maze of black, cruel rocks, round which the sea tumbles and glides ominously ; at last, after half-an-hour of intricate steering, through passages where no path seemed possible, a large village is reached, built like a lacustrine town on piles above the water. Svolvær is thrown about on a heap of islets and promontories, here a house and there a house, on a site even wilder than that of Balstad. The mountain rising sheer behind it is the Svolvær Fjeld. Tolerable accommodation may be got at this place, though the house of entertainment is, according to Mr. Bonney, very inconveniently situated. It had been decided by a commission, shortly before I arrived, that if ever it should be thought desirable to found a town on the Lofodens, this should be the site of it. Leaving Svolvær, the Östnæs Fjord, gloomy, narrow,

and terrible as that gate Dante saw in Hell, looms on our left; enormous mountains hem it in. On the west side, eminent above the rest, is a peak called, I believe, the Jomfrutind; it would be a dismal thing to have to live on the shores of this sombre and sinister water-glen.

But now, straight before us, we perceive three islands, not belonging to the general range, but standing at right angles to it, running far out in the Vest Fjord; and between them we see glimpses of the mainland, now not very distant. These islands are circular, and not indented by the sea; but a shelf of rock, covered with rough pasturage, runs round each of them, and then a mountain soars suddenly into the skies. Stor Molla, one of the largest, and nearest to Ost Vaagö, is a double peak of quite exceptional grandeur; and Lille Molla and Skraaven, though less lofty, are scarcely tamer in their forms. It is difficult to form a due conception of this peculiar masculine scenery; there is nothing pretty or charming about it, but it is eminently impressive. Compared with the rest of Norwegian sea-scenery, with that south of the Arctic Circle especially, it differs from it as an American backwoodsman differs from a London counter-jumper. I would here protest a little, in wonder, at the compliments paid to the coast scenery of South and Central Norway: saving that terrible sound which runs between Bremangerland and the main, under the awful cliffs of Hornelen, there is no ocean landscape from Torghatten to the Naze to call forth the slightest enthusiasm. There is much finer country in the Hebrides.

To return to Lille Molla. This island and its congeners are all inhabited, and not two hours' sail from Svolvær; on Stor Molla accommodation of some sort might probably be found, and I think this little group would be well worth investigation. It has just that amount of geographical independence which often suffices to produce a difference in flora and fauna. Between the two Mollas we steam, noticing the rough sæters on the shores, the rows of stockfish flapping in the wind, and the cauldrons of stewing livers, faintly odorous from the steamer's deck. The Ökellesund (for so the northern passage between Stor Molla and Vaagö appears to be called) is too narrow to admit the steamer, but turning north as we leave the Möldoren, we enter the celebrated Raftsund.

The Raftsund, which has won the hearty admiration of every traveller who has seen it, is a narrow channel, fifteen miles long, running north-east between Vaagö and Hindö. It is of various width, narrowest towards the north; on each side mountains of the most vigorous and eccentric forms rise in precipices and lose themselves in pinnacles and sharp edges that cut the clouds. As this is the one part of the Lofodens that has been somewhat minutely described, I need not linger in painting it. A few of the peaks, however, I can name. All the loftiest and boldest are on the Vaagö side. Perhaps the strangest is Iistind, a gigantic mass with a tower-like cairn on the summit; Mahomet's Tomb we nicknamed it, till a native obligingly gave its true title. This is at the middle of

the sound, where an island breaks the current, and several small fjords push into the land. Another very noble cluster of aiguilles is Ruttind, on Vaagö, but much to the south of Iistind. These peaks are mostly wreathed with foamy cloud, that on a fine day daintily rises and lays bare their dark beauty, and as airily closes round them again. About the summits the rifts and joints are full of snow all the summer, and from every bed, leaping over rocks and sliding down the smooth slabs of granite, a narrow line of water, white as the parent snow, falls in a long cataract to the sea. On the Hindö side, Kongstind, which lies north-east of Iistind, is the most striking mass. On both sides near the water the ground is covered with deep grass, of a bright green colour, and flowers bloom in beautiful abundance. In one place the harebells were so thick on the hillside that they gleamed, an azure patch, half a mile away. Flocks of sheep and goats luxuriate in this lush herbage; here and there ferns are in the ascendency, *Polypodium phlegopteris* and *dryopteris* being everywhere abundant.

Leaving the Raftsund, we suddenly enter that sea-lake which, as I have said, holds the centre of the archipelago. We are now at the heart of the enchanted land, and the sight before us is one of the loveliest that can be conceived. The bristling character of the southern coast gives place to a calmer, more placid scenery. Here there are no subtle rocks, no frightful reefs; all is simple, serene, and stately. I cannot do better than give my remembrance of the first time I saw this scene, on a calm sunlit morning

in July. Leaving the Raftsund, we bore due north. As we steamed through quiet shimmering water gently down on Ulvö, the ghostly mountains lay behind us, a semi-circle of purple shadow; down their sides the clear patches of snow, muffling the vast crevasses, shone, dead-white, or stretched in glaciers almost to the water's edge. In contrast to their grandeur, the sunny slopes of Ulvö rose before us, with the little kirk of Hassel nestling in a bright green valley; in its heart the violet peak of Söeterheid rose, hiding its dim head in the mystery of the vaporous air above. The sea had all the silence and the restfulness of dreamland: not a ripple broke the sheeny surface, save where a flock of ducklings followed the mother-bird in a fluttering arc, or where the cormorant hurled himself on some quivering fish. We drifted round the eastern promontory of the lovely island; peak by peak the pleasant hills of Langö gathered on our right, while to the left of us, and ever growing dimmer in the distance, the prodigious aiguilles of Vaagö, in their clear majestic colour, soared unapproachable above the lower foreground of Ulvö. Behind us now was Hindö, less grand perhaps than Vaagö, but displaying two central mountains of immense height, Fisketind and Mosadlen, the latter reported to attain a greater elevation than any in the group.

Langö lies very close on the right when we enter the Borösund and make for Stokmarknæs. Borö itself lies in the strait between Ulvö and Langö. The pretty hamlet on its shores was the centre of the investigations of Dr. George Berna and his friends, as related by Herr Carl

Vogt in his interesting *Nordfahrt*. On the northern shore of Ulvö, at the mouth of a small valley, lies the large village of Stokmarknæs. It is almost a town, containing perhaps one hundred and twenty houses; it may be the most populous place in the Lofodens, though I am told that the discovery of coal in Andö has greatly increased the village-port of Dvergberg in that island. Stokmarknæs looks very pretty from the sea, with its clean painted houses of deal wood, and bright tiled roofs. Ulvö is the richest, most fertile, and most populous of the islands. It stands in the sea like a hat, having a central mountain mass, and a broad rim of very flat and fertile land. To compare great things with mean, it is in shape extremely like that unpleasant island, Lunga, in the Hebrides, facetiously known as the Dutchman's Hat. Ulvö culminates in a single peak, by name Sæterheid, which rises close behind Stokmarknæs. This mountain, whose sides are principally covered by a thick jungle of birch underwood, slopes gradually away into a rocky ridge running across the island, and falls in steep precipitous cliffs to the flat lands that form the external rim. These flats were originally, I suppose, morasses, but have been in great part reclaimed, though on the eastern side of Sæterheid there are still great bogs, and two little tarns, full of trout. At Stokmarknæs (which is quite a place of importance, and had in the summer of 1871 a bazaar for the sick and wounded French) good accommodation can be had; Herr Halls, the land-handler, being in a condition to make visitors very comfortable, at a moderate charge, and this is a good station

to leave the steamer at. Herr Halls also supplies karjois, and a very pleasant excursion can be made on one of those arm-chairs-on-wheels to the south of the island. There is one road in Ulvö, running from Stokmarknæs round the eastern coast to Melbo, a gaard or farmstead opposite Vaagö. It is a very good road, more like a carriage-drive through a gentleman's park than a public thoroughfare. It is about ten miles from Stokmarknæs to Melbo. The road passes Hassel Church, at the eastern extremity of the island, an odd octagonal building of wood, painted red, with a high conical roof. Norwegian churches have an excessively undignified look; some are like pigeon-houses, some like pocket-telescopes. Hassel reminded me irresistibly of a mustard-pot. Yet it is a structure of high ecclesiastical dignity, for not only all Ulvö, but parts of Langö and Hindö, and the whole north of Vaagö, depend upon it for pastoral care. It is a very pretty sight on a summer Sunday morning to see the boats gathering from all parts to it, full of the simple, devout people in their holiday dress.

To judge by the number of red-shank and curlew that wheel above the traveller, or fluttër wailing before him, the bogs beside the road must teem with wild-fowl. The north side of the island is thickly dotted with farms and fishermen's huts, but after leaving Hassel and the adjoining hamlet of Steilo these diminish in number, till at Melbo the road itself disappears, and the flat land becomes a wild peat bog, with only a few huts near the sea. Melbo is simply a large farm, owned by Fru Coldevin, a lady who



opens her house in the summer for the accommodation of sportsmen and those few travellers that wander to this far end of the earth. A cluster of islets off the coast here is a part of her property. She preserves these rocks for the sea-birds, which flock to them in extraordinary numbers. Little kennels of turf and stone are built to shelter the nests, and here the eider-ducks strip themselves of their exquisite down for the sake of their offspring, and in due time see it appropriated by Fru Coldevin.

The lovely range of snowy points in Vaagö is seen on a fine day bewitchingly from Melbo. Mr. Bonney, who unhappily seems to have had execrable weather in the Lofodens, sighed pathetically at these peaks from Melbo. He gives Alpine names to the two highest, supposing apparently that they were nameless in the native tongue; they are not so neglected, however. The foremost mountain, which from Ulvö seems the highest, is Higräven, "the tomb or monument of the wild beast;" and the other, really the loftiest peak in Vaagö, is Blaamanden. The Rev. W. S. Green accomplished in 1871 the ascent of Higräven, and kindly permits me to transcribe from his journal the story of his adventure. Mr. Green's familiarity with Swiss Alpine scenery would tend to make him a severe critic of mountain effects, and that he can write thus enthusiastically of the Lofodens is no small proof of their wonderful beauty.

Mr. Green started from Melbo on a fine July morning, at 10 A.M.; the clouds, *taage*, masses of opaque white fleece on the sides of all the peaks, promised ill for the

expedition ; but soon these rolled away, and left the snowy rocks clear-cut against an azure sun-lit sky. "The face of the sea was as smooth as glass, and over it rose the long line of snow-capped peaks, softening from rugged purple crags to emerald-green slopes as they approached the sea, looking about a mile off, though in fact the nearest of them was seven. I had determined beforehand which peak I should climb : it seemed to be the highest in Ost Vaagö, and lay at the head of the Stover Fjord. My boatmen were pleasant fellows, and as I lay luxuriously in the stern, steering, I conversed with them in bad Norse ; my questions had reference principally to the sea-birds. A pretty little sort of guillemot with red legs they call *testhe* ; this bird is very common : another common bird, the hen-eider I think, is called *æ*. We passed many of these with a train of young ones after them. As the boat skimmed along we passed many beautiful jelly-fish : one sort of *bolina* about the size of a goose-egg was particularly common. At last, after winding through many islets, we enter the Stover Fjord : the only thing I can compare it to is the Bay of Uri, which I think it surpasses in beauty, and the Aiguille de Dru is rivalled by these snow-seamed pinnacles. But it was 12 o'clock, and I jumped ashore at a sort of elbow where the fjord forks. I put some provisions into my pocket ; then, with my sketching materials slung upon my back and my alpen-stock in my hand, I commenced the ascent. I first scrambled over boulders covered with fern, bushes, and wild flowers ; these soon became very steep, and slinging myself up hand over hand through the bushes

was very warm work. I took off my coat and hung it in the strap on my back ; after a sharp climb over steep rocks I got on to a slope of snow that filled the gorge. In about an hour and a half I reached a col that I had aimed at all through. I could see the boat, a speck below, so I jodeled at the top of my voice, and soon heard a faint answer. The place I had come up was very steep, and the thought of descending it again not very pleasant. I took the precaution, however, of fixing bits of white paper on the rocks and bushes where I had met with difficulty, to serve as guides in my descent. There was a glorious view from where I stood, and the day was perfection. After another hour of steep climbing I reached a cornice of snow, but was able to turn off to the right and cross a level plateau of snow, from the other side of which rose up my peak. I now encountered very steep snow-slopes and rocks, and just before the snow rounded off into the dom, forming a summit, it became so hard that my feet could get no hold. I had to resort to step-cutting : about a dozen steps sufficed to land me on the dom ; an easy incline then led to the summit, on which I stood at 4.30 P.M. I wished for an aneroid ; but from the time I took to ascend, and from other circumstances, I should think the height to be over 4000, and possibly 5000 feet. Now for the view. I have yet to see the Alpine view that surpasses this in its extreme beauty : the mountain chain of the mainland was in sight for, I suppose, a hundred miles ; then came the Vest Fjord, studded with islands. The mountains around me were of the wildest and most fantastic form, not drawn

out in a long chain, but grouped together, and embosoming lovely little tarns and lakes. The inner arm of the Stover Fjord, over which I seemed to hang, was of a deep dark blue, except where it became shallow, where it was of a bright pea-green. This latter colour may be accounted for by the fact that the rocks below low-water mark are white, with pure white nullipore and *balani*; there is no *laminaria* or sea-weed of any sort in these narrow fjords, except *Fucus vesiculosus*, and this grows only between tide-marks. Looking away to the north came Ulvö, with its fringe of islets; then Langö, with its sea of peaks: these do not appear, however, to be so high or rugged as the peaks of Hindö, that come next to the sight. Here Mosadlen stands up with his lovely crest of snow; far away, in an opposite direction, lies Vest Vaagö, where I remarked another peak that seemed to be of a respectable height. The view was perfection: one drop of bitterness was in my cup, and that was that a neighbouring peak was evidently higher than the one I had climbed. It was connected with my peak by a very sharp rock *arrête* just below which was a flattish plateau of crevassed *névé*: it was too far to think of trying it, and it looked very difficult; an attempt upon it would be more likely to succeed if made from the south-east. Having made a sketch and built a cairn of stones, I looked about for the easiest way to descend, and found that a long slope of snow led into a valley connected with the north arm of the fjord; this I determined to try. I climbed down the steps I had cut, with my face to the snow; then sitting down and steering with my alpenstock,

I made the finest glissade I ever enjoyed. As I neared the bottom it was necessary to go lightly, as a torrent was roaring along under the snow. I soon had to take to the moraine, which was of a most trying character. I now got down to a charming little lake, in which islands of snow floated, and in which the peaks were mirrored to their summits. Skirting along this, and descending by the edge of a stream that led out of it, I came to another lovely tarn, on which were a couple of water-fowl. From this I clambered down through bushes at the side of a waterfall, and arrived on the strand of the fjord all safe. At 6.30 P.M. I was sitting in the boat, and in two hours arrived in Melbo."

The superior peak that dashed Mr. Green's happiness was Blåamanden, which must now be considered the highest point out of Hindö. Vaagekallen is certainly lower even than Higraven.

Of the northern islands of the Lofoden group space fails me to speak much; they are but little known. Langö was skirted by the German expedition whose story is "erzählt von Carl Vogt," but his notes on this part of the tour are unfortunately very scanty. The northern peninsula would seem to be the finest part of Langö. I hear of a splendid mountain, Klotind, which fills this tongue of land with its spurs. Andö, the most northerly of the archipelago, is the tamest of all; the interior of it has been surveyed with such minute care that it is impossible to suppose its mountains can be very rugged. For the sake of any one desirous of visiting Andö, I may remark

that a little steamer has been started in connection with the large boat which meets the latter at Harstadhavn in Hindö, skirts the north of that island, calls at Dvergberg and Andenæs in Andö, and after a visit to the north of Senjen returns the same way to Harstad. The same steamer calls off the coast of Grytö, a mountainous Lofoden, whose vast central peak of Fussen is seen in the distance from the Vaags Fjord.

In ordinary years the snow disappears from the low ground in these islands before May, and the rapid summer brings their scanty harvest soon to perfection. A few years ago, however, the snow lay on the cultivated lands till June, and a famine ensued. These poor people live a precarious life, exposed to the attacks of a singularly peevish climate. A whim of the cod-fish, a hurricane in the April sky, or a cold spring, is sufficient to plunge them into distress and poverty. Yet for all this they are an honest and well-to-do population; for, being thrifty and laborious, they guard with much foresight against the severities of nature. In winter the aurora scintillates over their solemn mountains, and illuminates the snows and wan grey sea; they sit at their cottage-doors and spin by the gleam of it; in summer the sun never sets, and they have the advantage of endless light to husband their hardly-won crops. Remote as they are, too, they can all read and write: it is strange to find how much intelligent interest they take in the struggles of great peoples who never heard of Lofoden. It is a fact, too, not over-flattering to our boasted civilisation, that the education of

children in the hamlets of this remote cluster of islands in the Polar Sea is higher than that of towns within a small distance of our capital city ; ay, higher even, proportionally, than that of London itself.

I would fain linger over the delicious memories that the name of these wild islands brings with it ; would fain take the reader to the pine-covered slopes of Sandtorv, the brilliant meadow of little Kjoen, so refreshing in this savage land ; to the Tjeldæsund, as I saw it on a certain midnight, when the lustrous sun-light lay in irregular golden bars across the blue spectral mountains, and tinged the snow peaks daintily with rose-red. But space is wanting, and being forced to choose, I will wind up with a faint description of the last sight I had of the islands on a calm sunny night in summer.

All day we had been winding among the tortuous tributaries of the Ofoten Fjord, and as evening drew on slipped down to Tranö, a station on the mainland side of the Vest Fjord, near the head of that gulf. It had been a cloudless day of excessive heat, and the comparative coolness of night was refreshing. The light, too, ceased to be garish, but flooded all the air with mellow lustre. From Tranö we saw the Lofodens rising all along the northern sky, a gigantic wall of irregular jagged peaks, pale blue on a horizon of gold fire. The surface of the fjord was slightly broken into little tossing waves that, murmuring faintly, were the only audible things that broke the silence. The edge of the ripple shone with the colour of burnished bronze, relieved by the cool neutral grey of the

sea-hollows. From Tranö we slipped across the fjord almost due west to the mouth of the Raftsund. The sun lay like a great harvest-moon, shedding its cold yellow light down on us from over Hindö, till, as we glided gradually more under the shadow of the islands, he disappeared behind the mountains. At 11.30 P.M. we lost him thus, but a long while after a ravine in Hindö of more than common depth again revealed him, and a portion of his disc shone for a minute like a luminous point or burning star on the side of a peak. About midnight we came abreast of Aarstenen, and before us rose the double peak of Lille Molla, of a black-blue colour, very solemn and grand. Skraaven was behind, and both were swathed lightly in wreaths and fox-tails of rose-tinged mist. There was no lustre on the waters here. The entrance to the sound was unbroken by any wave or ripple, unilluminated by any light of sunset or sunrise, but a sombre reflex of the unstained blue heaven above. As we glided, in the same strange utter noiselessness of the hour when evening and morning meet, up the Raftsund itself, enclosed by the vast slopes of Hindö and the keen *aiguilles* of Vaagö, the glory and beauty of the scene rose to a pitch so high that the spirit was oppressed and overawed by it, and the eyes could scarcely fulfil their function. Ahead of the vessel the narrow vista of glassy water was a blaze of purple and golden colour arranged in a faultless harmony of tone that was like music or lyrical verse in its direct appeal to the emotions. At each side the fjord reflected each elbow, each edge, each cataract, and even the flowers and herbs of



the base, with a precision so absolute that it was hard to tell where mountain ended and sea began. The centre of the sound, where it spreads into several small arms, was the climax of loveliness, for here the harmonious vista was broadened and deepened, and here rose listind towering into the unclouded heavens, and showing by the rays of golden splendour that lit up its topmost snows, that it could see the sun, whose magical fingers, working unseen of us, had woven for the world this tissue of variegated beauty.

## *RUNEBERG.*

AT the opening of the present century the monarchy of Sweden lay defenceless and almost moribund, supported in European opinion solely by the memory of its vast prestige. The dynasty of Wasa, which had held the crown for nearly two centuries, and from the hands of whose successive kings Sweden had received such matchless glory and such a world of sorrows, was approaching its last degeneracy in the person of Gustavus IV., a prim and melancholy bigot, touched with madness, and retaining of the iron will and clear intelligence of his ancestors nothing but a silly obstinacy and the ingenuity of a wizard maker of prophetic almanacks. The old order was passing away throughout Europe, and the new had scarcely taken fixed form or entity. Geographically, Sweden had been dwindling throughout the eighteenth century, drying up, as it were, along the south shores of the Baltic: Courland was lost, Esthonia lost, even Pomerania was assailed. Finland, the most precious, the most extensive outland province, forming more than a fourth of the entire dominion, remained untouched, or almost untouched. There had not been wanting signs of Russian ambition working on the vast open frontier by Lake Ladoga. Already, before the century was half out, the

great new power of Eastern Europe had determined that its capital would never be secure until the Russian supremacy was acknowledged everywhere east of the Gulf of Bothnia. The Empress Elizabeth, while seizing the eastern counties of the province, had dangled before Finland the tempting hope of national independence under a protectorate of Russia. In 1788 the malcontent nobles, met at Anjala, offered to another great woman, to the Empress Catharine II., the dictatorship of Finland; but their treason infuriated the middle and lower classes, and when the Russian army commenced its invasion in 1789 it was met by a resistance as determined as it was unexpected. It was in this campaign that modern Finland first expressed itself; the war culminated in the battle of Porrasalmi, a glorious victory for the Finns, in which Adlercreutz and Döbeln, afterwards so famous as generals, won their spurs. The peace of Wärälä, in 1790, left Finland full of the enthusiasm of military success, and loyal as a dependency of Sweden. But the murder of Gustavus III., at the Opera House of Stockholm, in 1792, brought the luckless Gustavus IV. to the throne, and reduced the nation to despair. One of the first events of the new reign was the loss of Pomerania. Finland now became the most precious, as it was the last, jewel in the Swedish Crown; and to comfort his excellent Finnish subjects, and to strengthen their hearts in the fear of "Punaparte," as the Finns called Napoleon, the dreary monarch made a solemn tour through the province in 1802. Thus security reigned for a little while on both

sides of the Gulf of Bothnia, Europe in the meantime writhing, convulsed by a conjunction of wars that threatened to conclude in chaos.

At this eventful moment the greatest poet that has ever used the Swedish tongue saw the light in a sea-port of Finland. Johan Ludvig Runeberg was born February 5, 1804, at Jakobsstad, a little town half-way up the Gulf of Bothnia. He was the son of a merchant captain, and the eldest of six children. The straitened means of the parents induced them to accept the offer of the father's brother, a very well-to-do man in Uleåborg, who offered to adopt Johan Ludvig. Thither, therefore, far away north, to the extreme town of the country, the child went. In Uleåborg he must have seen the birthplace of the greatest then-living poet of Finland, Franzén, in whose steps he was afterwards to tread. We know little of his boyhood, except that at due age he was sent to the college at Wasa, and that he was so poor that he could only continue his studies there by serving as tutor to the younger and richer boys. But in the meantime changes of vast importance had occurred in the constitution of his country—changes to which he was destined in after life to give immortality by his art. In 1807 Napoleon had met Alexander I. at Tilsit, and had offered Finland to the Russian monarch in exchange for help against England. By one of those coincidences which give history the air of a well-planned sensational drama, the autocrat who now lies under a mass of Finnish porphyry in his Parisian tomb set out on the last great perilous enterprise which led

him to his doom by the sacrifice of Finland to Russian ambition. In February 1808, three Russian armies broke into Finland. Like the troops who obeyed the summons from Anjala in 1788, these armies were grievously disappointed to find the fruit not ripe or ready to drop into their hand. Everywhere the Swedish sentiment was decided; the Finns rose in arms, 19,000 strong, and collected around the fortress of Tavasthus. But their resistance was at first not very successful. The south of the province was overpowered. Sveaborg, an impregnable maritime citadel, the Gibraltar of the north, built by Augustin Ehrensvärd, in 1749, on seven islets at the entrance of the harbour of Helsingfors, was shamefully and treasonably surrendered. In May the Russians marched into Helsingfors. Meanwhile the Finlanders had a different fortune in the north, where, under two noble generals, Adlercreutz and Döbeln, they rallied their forces to defend the sea-coast and the Bothnia districts. On April 18, across the frozen river Siikajoki, the Swedes and Finlanders won their first victory, and defeated the Russians again, nine days later, at Revolax. A little later, Döbeln contrived to drive the enemy back from the walls of Nykarleby, and to win a signal victory at Lappo. But on September 14, 1808, Adlercreutz lost all but honour at the terrible battle of Oravais, the most fiercely contested and the decisive engagement of the campaign. Finland was lost, and by the Peace of Fredrikshamn, on September 17, 1809, it was finally annexed, as a grand duchy, to the dominions of Russia.

Such were the events which agitated the childhood of Runeberg. In after life he clearly remembered seeing Döbeln and Kulneff, the Swedish general with the black band round his forehead that concealed the wound in the left temple which he bore away after the battle of Porro-salmi, the Russian general with his bright eyes and long brown beard. He saw them in the streets of Jakobsstad, when he was four years old, and this memory gave a particular colouring to his pictures of the war. Stories were repeated in his presence of the chivalric regard which each opponent had for the other—how Kulneff forbade his Cossacks to fire upon Döbeln, and how Döbeln's soldiers respected the person of Kulneff; and when he came to write *Fänrik Stals Sägner* there was to be found among the portraits of friends and patriots a noble tribute to the generous Russian leader also. It is noticeable that in the native literature of Finland, since the annexation, there is none of the tone of smothered insurrection which marks the atmosphere of Poland, or even the dull discontent of Esthonia and Courland. The Swedish Lutherans of Finland have been by far the best treated of all the dependants of the empire. No attempt has been made to force Russian upon them as their official language, no check has been put on the free development of the literature, even when, as in the case of Runeberg, that development has taken the form of deepening and extending the patriotic sentiment. The fact is, that under the easy Russian yoke Finland is almost as free as she was under the Wasas, and has actually attained that intellectual and spiritual independence which

Porthan, her great citizen of the eighteenth century, dreamed for her—an independence which consists in liberty of thought, the spread of an education congenial to the nature of the people, and a free development of science and *belles lettres*.

In the autumn of 1822, Runeberg, then in his nineteenth year, left Wasa to enter a student life in the University of Åbo. He enjoyed few of the luxuries and the amenities which we identify with the existence of an undergraduate. Such a university life as is to be found in Aberdeen or St. Andrews presents a truer analogy with that in a Scandinavian town. Most of the students were poor, many of them extremely poor, and among these few had a harder struggle than Runeberg. In the spring of 1827 he successfully closed his examinations, and received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It was a little earlier than this that he made his first appearance before the literary public. One evening in 1826 a party of young people met at the house of Archbishop Tengström, the metropolitan of Finland; a game of forfeits was set on foot, the last of which was lost by a student of the name of Runeberg. The young ladies put their heads together, and finally decided that, as he was suspected of writing verses, he should then and there compose a Hymn to the Sun. This he accomplished, nothing loth; and it was so highly approved of that Sjöström, then considered one of the chief Finnish poets, printed it forthwith in a newspaper of which he was the editor. The young poet had hardly received his degree, when an event occurred which entirely revolutionised his

career. On a mild September evening in 1827, as the good people of Åbo were going to bed, they were alarmed to hear the tocsin furiously sounded from the tower of their cathedral. A girl had spilt some tallow, the tallow had taken fire, and in half-an-hour the wood-built city was in a blaze. The fire spread with infinite velocity, engulfed the university first, and then the cathedral; before the morning broke, not an eighth of the flourishing capital of Finland still existed. In the confusion that ensued, the university was transferred to Helsingfors, a larger town further east on the Gulf of Finland, and this place has since then been the seat of government. Runeberg was left to choose his career. He decided to leave the sea-coast, where he associated only with educated persons using the Swedish language, and to penetrate into the heart of the country, by so doing to gain a knowledge of his beautiful fatherland and its singular aborigines. He therefore accepted a tutorship in a family living at Saarijärvi, a sequestered village in the heart of the country, on the high road between the Gulf of Bothnia and the White Sea. Here he had plenty of leisure to study the primitive life of the country people, among the desolate and impressive scenery of the interior. Saarijärvi lies on the extreme arm of one of the great winding lakes, that seem to meander for ever between forest and moorland, thickly dotted with innumerable islands. Round it stretch in every direction the interminable beech-woods, muffling the air with such a silence that the woodman's axe falls with a mysterious, almost with a sinister sound. There are few spots in



Europe so utterly remote and inaccessible; the solitude is broken only by the farmer's cart, the footstep of some wandering Finn or Quain, or the voice of a Russian pedlar from Archangel singing loudly to keep himself company through the woods. Here it was that Runeberg buried himself for three years. He had a good many books, mainly the Greek poets; he studied hard, whether nature was his master or Homer, and he set himself studiously to unlearn whatever his teachers had taught him of the art of Swedish poetry. The ruling genius of Sweden at that date was Tegnér, the famous poet of 'Frithiofs saga,' in whom the peculiarly Swedish vice of style, which consists in cultivating empty and sonorous phrases, had reached its climax. Tegnér was a poet of great genius, but he had not the intellectual courage or the inclination to cast behind him the poetic phraseology of his day. Instead of doing this, instead of adopting a realistic style, he simply gilded and polished the old "ideal" language, and the practical result of his brilliant productions was to paralyse poetry in Sweden for half a century. It was right that the voice which was to do away for ever with this glitter and fustian should come out of the wilderness. Not in Lund or Upsala, but in an unknown village in the heart of the forests of Finland, the seed was germinating which was destined to fill the whole country with a flower of a new sort, a veritable wood-rose to take the place of the fabulous asphodel. In Tegnér the old forces that battled in Swedish literature had found a common ground, and, as it were, an apotheosis. There were no longer academic writers who loved the old

French rules, "Phosphorists" who outdid Tieck and Novalis in mysticism, Gothic poets who sought to reconcile the antique Scandinavian myths to elegant manners and modern thoughts; all these warring groups united in Tegnér or were extinguished by him. Between Tegnér and Runeberg the natural link is wanting. This link properly consists, it appears to me, in Longfellow, who is an anomaly in American literature, but who has the full character of a Swedish poet, and who, had he been born in Sweden, would have completed exactly enough the chain of style that ought to unite the idealism of Tegnér to the realism of Runeberg. The poem of *Evangeline* has really no place in Anglo-Saxon poetry; in Swedish it would accurately express a stage in the progress of literature which is now unfilled. It is known that Mr. Longfellow has cultivated the language of Sweden with much assiduity, and has contemplated literary life in that country with all the unconscious affection of a changeling.

The years spent by Runeberg at Saarijärvi were occupied in almost continual literary production. He wrote here the most important and most original works of his early manhood. Among these must be mentioned *Svartsjukans nätter* ("Nights of Jealousy"), a large part of his *Lyrical Poems*, and his great epic or idyl of *Elgskyttarne*, or "The Elk Hunters." Of these the lyrical poems have lately been translated in their entirety in a version remarkable for care and scholarship.<sup>1</sup> They were originally

<sup>1</sup> Johan Ludvig Runeberg's *Lyrical Songs, Idylls, and Epigrams*, done into English by Eirikr Magnusson and E. H. Palmer. London, 1878.

published, together with a collection of Servian Folk-songs, in 1830, and formed Runeberg's first published volume. This publication followed close upon the young writer's reappearance in the civilised world; he left his hermitage in that year to accept the post of amanuensis to the council of the university, now settled in Helsingfors. The volume was dedicated to Franzén, the poet-bishop of Hernösand, one of the most illustrious persons Finland had produced; a poem addressed to this eminent man breathes the same fresh and unconventional air that animates the body of the book itself, and also contains not a few traces of the study of the poet eulogised. In fact, the influence of Franzén is strong throughout the early writings of Runeberg—a pure and genial, but not robust influence, which did the young poet no harm, and out of which he very speedily grew. Franzén wrote to him a letter full of tenderness and prophecy. “I know,” he had the generosity to write to this unknown beginner, “that it is a great poet that Finland is about to produce in you.” The perfume of the violet and the song of the lark were strong in this book of thoroughly sincere and unaffected verses; and the public was not slow in acknowledging the Bishop of Hernösand to have been a true prophet.

In 1831 he attempted to win larger laurels than the coteries of Helsingfors could offer him. He sent in to the annual prize-giving of the Swedish Academy a poem of considerable length, *Grafven i Perrho* (“The Grave in Perrho”), a work which for the first time displayed to

advantage his rich severity of style, his epic force and freshness. It was the story of a grave in the wilds of Finland, the grave of an old man and his six tall sons, and told with infinite beauty the tragic circumstances that laid them there. The Swedish Academy, unable to overlook so much originality, but unwilling to crown a realist who disregarded the conventionalities so rudely, rewarded the poet with the small gold medal—a distinction commonly given to very mediocre merit. Still this was a measure of national recognition: and, in the glee of success, Runeberg married one of the young ladies who had set him his first lesson in verse five years before, at the house of Archbishop Tengström. This year, indeed, proved a turning-point in his life, for he received a post which bound him to the capital; in reward for a learned tractate comparing the *Medea* of Euripides with the *Medea* of Seneca, he was appointed Lecturer on Roman Literature at the University. From this time forward every step was an advance; he felt himself more and more sure of his genius, of his representative position in so small a state as Finland, where he began to take a place as literary oracle. He now undertook the labours of Journalism, and founded a newspaper, the *Helsingfors Morgonblad*, which he edited with such success that it became the most influential journal in the grand duchy. Runeberg remained sole editor until 1837, and during these years he made it the medium of spreading far and wide the principles of culture and literary taste. All the best critical writings of the poet, all which is preserved in the sixth volume of his collected

works, originally saw the light in the columns of the *Helsingfors Morgonblad*.

The greatest result of his solitude at Saarijärvi remained, however, still unknown till in 1832 he published his *Elgskyttarne*, or "The Elk Hunters." This poem marks an epoch in Swedish literature. It is as remarkable in its way as the novels of Zola; it begins a new class of work, it is one of the masterpieces of scrupulous realism, a true product of the nineteenth century. The form is the same adopted by Voss, Goethe, Tegnér, Kingsley, and many more North European poets for narrative work—the dactylic hexameter. But the Swedish language suits this exotic growth much better than German or English: there are more compact masses of rolling sound to be obtained, it is far more easy to observe the rules of position. Runeberg seems to have gone straight back to Homer for his model; and though there are moments when we feel that he could not entirely forget *Hermann und Dorothea*, his hexameters have as a rule a more pure and classical character than Goethe's.

The plan of the poem is as follows. The local magnate of an inland Finnish district, the Kommissarie or Agent, has ordered all the chief men of the place to meet at his house for an elk-hunt next morning. The worthy farmer, Petrus, at home in his large guest-room, prepares, half overcome with sleep, for the duties of the morrow, furbishing up his gun, and listening to his wife Anna, as she busies herself in the house and gossips. The door opens, and Anna's brother, Mathias,

a rich farmer from a distant parish, whose wife had died about a year before, appears on an improvised visit. He has scarcely sat down to supper, when Anna commences to mourn over the desolate condition of his children, and urges him to find a wife to take care of his fine home at Kuru. Petrus proposes the beauty of their parish, Hedda, the daughter of Zacharias, and the pair paint her virtues in such glowing terms that Mathias begins to wish to see her. It is agreed that he shall follow the hunt next morning, and be introduced to her incidentally at the meet. Next morning Petrus is waked by the noise of a quarrel between Pavo, one of his servants, and Aron, a beggar to whom, after the Finnish custom, he is exercising hospitality. He rises in the dark winter morning, and he and Mathias start for the rendezvous. It is a ringing frosty day, or rather night, for the stars are still brilliant overhead. Petrus supplies his brother-in-law with an old Swedish rifle, a jewel of a weapon, as he explains in an episode. It was with this rifle that Petrus's uncle, Joannes, picked out a spy at an incredible distance in 1808, and this leads to other tales of the great war with which they beguile the way to the Agent's. At last they reach the house, and receive a warm welcome; already the guest-room is full of people, and among the first they meet are Zacharias and his lovely daughter Hedda. There are, moreover, a group of Russian pedlars from Archangel who recognise Mathias, and loudly praise the hospitality they lately enjoyed at his house in Kuru. One of the pedlars, the brown-bearded Ontrus, thinks this an excellent opportunity for hawking his wares,

and we have an exquisite picture of the girls darting like swallows around his pack as he displays his treasures. But alas! they are poor, and there are no purchases. Mathias conceives that this is the moment for him to advance. He buys presents for them all, but the most costly and most tempting for Hedda. Petrus cannot help paying the beautiful girl a compliment in these words—

“ As when a cloud in spring hangs bright o’er the trees on a hill-side,  
Hushed is the underwood all, and the birches stand mutely admiring,  
Watching the pride of the morning, the rose-hued breast of the  
cloudlet,  
Till from the heart of it issues a breeze, and the shoots on the branches  
Tenderly wave, and their leaves half unfolded shiver with pleasure,  
Not less quivers the youth when he gazes on Hedda and hears her.”<sup>1</sup>

Hedda finds herself in a shy confusion, and sends Mathias a grateful glance when he reproves his brother-in-law for this persiflage. The Agent now appears, dawn is breaking, and the hunters all go out into the snow, Mathias still dreaming of the beauty of Hedda. However, they call upon him for a story, and he rouses himself to describe, in the most powerful and brilliant language, the killing of a bear. They find the elk on a wooded island, and the hunt begins; but we are transported back to the Agent’s guest-room, where the Archangel traders have made themselves cosy with the girls, and where the youngest of them, the handsome Tobias, excited with beer and love, begins to dance about, and to offer the indignant Hedda all his wares in exchange for a kiss.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix T.

His elder brother, Ontrus, turns him out of doors, where he screams and sings and jumps about till he drops down fast asleep. Ontrus gravely presses on Hedda the advantages she would find in marrying this his scapegrace brother, till she at last escapes from his importunity by joining the old women upstairs. Ontrus then has a violent quarrel with a spiteful ancient dame, the cripple Rebecca, and at last falls fast asleep upon the floor. This odd scene is described with great humour, and in minute detail, like a Teniers. Meanwhile the hunt proceeds; four elks are shot, of which Mathias bags two with the famous Swedish gun. On the way home he asks Zacharias for leave to court his daughter. No sooner has he entered the guest-room than he finds an opportunity of speaking to Hedda, and is on the point of tenderly pressing his suit, when the abominable old Rebecca puts in an ear and spoils it all. The girl flies to an upper room, but Mathias sends Petrus after her. A very quaint and charming scene ensues. Petrus sits down with his pipe opposite the conscious maiden, and recounts at great length the virtues and the possessions of this "brave Mathias from Kuru,"—how fine his farmstead is, how wild and fertile his fields are,—taking care to explain that they consist of rich black top-soil on a clayey bottom. These poetic details move the maiden less than an eloquent recital of the vigour and excellence of the possessor, and Petrus begs her not to refuse because Mathias is no longer a romantic youth. He perorises thus—

"Never so rich is in blossoms a field in the heart of the summer,  
Child, as in pleasures the way to the grave if we walk with contentment ;



If we but step with a care to the road, nor let Hope the enchantress  
Leap from the path at our feet, and persuade us another were fairer.  
Only the fool is beguiled, but he follows and wantonly wavers,  
Never at peace, till death suddenly falls on him, sighing, and takes  
him." <sup>1</sup>

Hedda finds it difficult to reply, but at last she manages to murmur a pretty and modest assent. And she sits awhile, weeping for pleasure, and patting Petrus's hand, until he weeps too, to keep her company. Then Mathias comes, and all is happiness. We are now taken back to the homestead at Tjäderkulle, where Anna sits at home, while Aron the beggar plays national airs upon the jew's-harp—an instrument, perhaps, hitherto unknown to epic poetry. At Anna's desire he tells the terrible story of his life: how one bad season after another ruined him, till at last his wife died of starvation, and he himself nearly went mad. He has scarcely closed this tragical recital, when Petrus enters, and proposes they should all immediately proceed to the Agent's house, to be present at the betrothal of Mathias; this they accordingly do, and the poem ends with a spirited and humorous picture of the scene at the ceremony.

The next few years of Runeberg's life were full of work and happiness. In 1833 he published a second volume of lyrical poems, and improved his economical position by lecturing on Greek literature in the university. It was about the same time that he met the indefatigable collector of Finnish legends, the famous Dr. Elias Lönnroth, then

still occupied in patting together the ancient epic of the *Kalevala*. In this new-found treasure-house of mythological wealth Runeberg took the keenest interest, and translated the beginning of it into Swedish. In 1836 Lönnroth made himself and Finland famous throughout Europe by his publication of the original text. It is perhaps fortunate that Runeberg did not carry out his original idea of translating the whole of the *Kalevala*, a work well performed by less representative hands than his. In 1834 he had attempted dramatic creation, in the form of a comedy in verse, *Friaren från Landet* ("The Country Lover"), which was acted and printed in *Morgonblad*, but which the poet would never allow to be reprinted among his works. In 1836 appeared a poem far more worthy of his genius, the delicate idyl of *Hanna*. This also is written in hexameters, and closes the first period of his poetic career. It was dedicated "To the First Love," and it forms, in fact, a kind of modern "Romeo and Juliet." In a quiet Finland parsonage the pastor sits in his study, calmly smoking his pipe, and gazing over the hazy landscape. It is a warm summer afternoon, and he sits waiting for his son, who has just passed his examination at Åbo. The lad has been told that if he passes he may bring home with him some poor comrade to spend the vacation in the country; and he has passed, so a stranger is expected. In another room sits the pastor's lovely daughter, Hanna, weaving, but the perfume of the lilacs, blossoming at the open window, troubles her fancy, and she leans out into the warm air,

her brain full of little graceful vanities, the pretty whims of a spoilt child. At this moment the old housekeeper, Susanna, enters, and tells her to dress as quickly as she can to receive the Bailiff, a man of fifty, rich and respected, who has just come to pay her father a visit. From some words the portly gentleman has let fall, she fancies that his mission is to ask Hanna for his wife. The girl is much fluttered but not displeased at this notion: to be the chief lady of the place is flattering to her vanity, and she does not comprehend what it is to be a wife. Her father comes to call her down, and though she clings to Susanna in her confusion, she is absolutely obliged to open the study-door at last.

“Blushing she stood at the door, in the exquisite charm of her shyness,  
Coy as a strip of the sea that is caught by the rush of the morning,  
Slender and quivering in rosy dismay through the gloom of the wood-  
lands.”<sup>1</sup>

The Bailiff is hardly less confused than she; but her father, who greatly desires the match, expends much flowing speech, till the suitor succeeds in gaining confidence, and expatiates on the charms of his house and garden, the latter being so well-cultured and protected that sometimes, in very warm summers, they manage to ripen an apple. He apologises much for his age, though this has not occurred to Hanna as an objection. They give her some days to make up her mind, and she flies to her own room. There a girl, half friend, half dependent,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix V.

called Johanna, is taken into her confidence, and violently objects to the match, advising Hanna to wait for some young suitor. Hanna, a little shaken in resolution, is desiring more light on this difficult subject, when suddenly her brother and his friend arrive. The Bailiff has by this time gone, and the pastor is left free to welcome his son. The friend is discovered to be the son of the poet whose bosom companion the pastor was at college, and who died early. He is a handsome, ardent, ingenuous youth, and the old man is delighted thus to renew the early alliance. Hanna enters, and there is mutual love at first sight. With him it is conscious, with her it is an unconscious trouble and dismay for which she cannot account. The pastor desires that they should embrace one another as if they were brother and sister, and Hanna kisses him lightly, like a summer wind, and disappears, to think it all over in her own room.

“So she thought to herself, and her thoughts were less words than a perfume.” She smiles to think how fresh and radiant he is, and then she weeps—not, she says, for love, but in anger that he, a young poor student, should dare to look so charming and so confidential. They have the evening meal together, and then her brother insists that she and the friend should go with him for a long stroll together. They proceed down to the lake, and the brother expatiates on the scene, a truly inland landscape, unlike the coast of the Gulf of Finland at Åbo.

“Look at the lake in the sunset,” he answered, “look you, how unlike 'Tis to the sea as it moans round the rock-built shores of your childhood!

Here there are verdure and colour and life; quaint numberless islands

Shoot from the breast of the wave, and, gracefully swaying on each one,

Clumps of underwood offer the worn-out mariner shadow.

Follow me down to the beach, calm strip between meadow and water,

Here you may glance o'er a wider expanse, discerning the hamlet

Dimly sequestered afar, and the steeple that shines in the distance."<sup>1</sup>

They continue their walk in the soft and magical air of a northern sunset, while their voices grow intenser and graver. A talk about wild birds reveals the tenderness of Hanna's nature, and she is led to tell, with exquisite pathos, the story of the death of an old fisherman whose hut they pass. At last the brother confesses that he is betrothed to the friend's sister. They all seat themselves in the purple twilight round a bubbling well, and subdued by the witchcraft of the sound of the water, the perfume of the earth and the colour of the heavens, the lovers, who only met a few hours before, obey a sovereign impulse and fall into each other's arms. The brother is delighted; all three proceed, through the deepening dusk to ask the father's blessing, which he grants with some surprise, but with a very fairly good grace.

The great landmarks in a poet's life are events which would scarcely be worthy of mention in the biography of a man of action. The solitude at Saarijarvi, the public career in Helsingfors, had each in succession

<sup>1</sup> Appendix W.

moulded and ripened the powers of Runeberg's mind ; a third step, the last in his life, was to develop those powers to their utmost, and to prepare him for their natural decay. In 1837 he accepted a professorate of Latin Literature at the College of Borgå, and removed thither with his family. This quiet little town remained his home for forty years, until his death. Borgå, which the long residence of Runeberg had rendered famous, lies some thirty miles east of Helsingfors, close to the sea, and on the high road into Russia. It has a cathedral and a bishop, and enjoys a certain sleepy distinction that prevents it from becoming too tamely provincial ; but nothing can avail to make it other than a very hushed and dreamy little place. The poet became exceedingly attached to Borgå, and soon fell into that absolute, almost mechanical round of life which so often marks the later years of men of genius. In this quietude, which the college and the cathedral preserved from entire stagnation, he was able to write without distraction, and with the utmost regularity. He was now recognised as a leading poet throughout Scandinavia : in 1839 the Swedish Academy, of its own free will, voted him the large gold medal, the highest compliment in its gift, and had he been a citizen of Sweden he would without doubt have been forthwith elected into that stately body. Baron von Beskow, on behalf of the Academy, conveyed to the young Finnish poet a series of compliments that could not fail to gratify him. It was indeed a period of transition. The old writers were passing away ; several eminent poets of

the elder generation had just died—Wadman, Nicander, Wallin. Tegnér was at the height of his glory; there was no young man so fit to be considered heir-apparent of the skaldship as Runeberg. He was thus urged on to still higher attainment. His first work at Borgå was of doubtful success. *Julqvällen*, or “Christmas Eve,” is an idyll of the same class as *The Elk Hunters* and *Hanna*, but it possesses neither the force of the first nor the sweetness and colour of the second. It is not even a complete story; it is merely an episode, and an episode not specially suited to poetic treatment. At the same time it is worked out with even finer dramatic tact and insight. An old crippled soldier, Pistol, is stumbling from his hut in the woods, through the snow, to the house of the Major, who has invited him to come to spend the festive Christmas Eve with his servants. Much jollity, however, cannot be expected: every one has some near relative away in the Russian armies fighting the Turk, and who knows if he be alive or dead? Pistol thinks of his only son, the apple of his eye, of whom he has for a long while heard nothing. While he tramps on, he hears a carriage behind him, and the clear voice of the Major’s younger daughter, Augusta, calling to him to get in and ride. She is the light of the whole parish, and a universal favourite. Her elder sister, whose husband is away in the war, and her mother, spend their days in weeping and sighing, and nearly drive the old Major out of his wits; Augusta alone tries to keep up something like cheerfulness at home. When they arrive at the house, Pistol goes into the kitchen, Augusta

into the guest-room, where she finds the usual scene of petulant recrimination going on. Even she is almost in despair. But by degrees she manages to bring peace into the house again, and the way in which the Christmas Eve is spent, above stairs and below, is described very brightly and humorously. In the midst of it all there is a great noise in the courtyard, lights are brought, and it is found that the Lieutenant, Augusta's brother-in-law, has come back safe and sound. There are universal rejoicings, until he comes to explain that poor Pistol's son has been killed by the enemy in a skirmish. This renews their regret, and Pistol is almost broken-hearted, 'hinking of the desolate life he must now live, alone in the woods. But the Major declares that he will not allow him to go back to that solitude; he must in future take up his abode as one of the retainers of the great house, and in the prospect of so much kindness he is a little consoled for his loss. In *Julqvällen* Runeberg returns to the rigidly realistic style of *Elgskyttarne*, which he had partly abandoned in *Hanna* in favour of a tenderer and more romantic feeling.

In the same year, 1841, he published a very different poem, and a more successful one. He had hitherto devoted himself entirely to the study of Finnish character and the scenery of Finland; in *Nadeschda* he has drawn from his experience of Russian character and manners, and has in fact written one of those Buillnas or national Russian epics about which Mr. Ralston has told us much and promised us more in his charming *Songs of the Russian*



*People.* This curious poem is closely allied to the lyrical stories that Ruibnikof collected on the shores of Lake Onega from the lips of the peasants; it is composed from the peasant's point of view, and shows a singular insight into Russian popular feeling. Until Mr. Ralston completes his study of the *Builinas*, it is not easy for a non-Russian student to understand what is exactly the form of these curious epics; but Runeberg has probably been correct in composing *Nadeschda* in a great variety of unrhymed, strongly accentuated measures. *Nadeschda* is a lovely Russian girl, a serf, and when the poem opens we find her wandering beside a tributary of the Moskwa, stirring the flowers with her fair feet, and dreaming of some vague lover, who will come to marry her. She bends over the water, and while she is admiring her own reflection, she remembers that this beauty is the beauty of a slave, and can be bought and sold. At this moment Miljutin, her foster-father, comes to summon her to the festival of welcoming Prince Woldmar, their master, back to the castle. *Nadeschda* will not come, full of this new revolt against the humiliation of her birth. At last Miljutin persuades her to come, and leaves her that she may adorn herself; but she refuses to bathe in the river, to girdle herself with flowers, or to put on her saint's-day garments. She weaves a belt of thistles and other dolorous herbs, and binding them round her common dress, she follows Miljutin.

Meanwhile Prince Woldmar is approaching in a golden chariot, accompanied by his brother Dmitri, who is burning with jealousy to see the noble estate which his brother has

inherited. Just outside the gates they stop, at Dmitri's desire, and while the *cortège* waits, the brothers, with their falcons on their wrists, pass out into the woodland. They send their hawks after a dove, who flies in terror into Woldmar's bosom, and Woldmar's falcon kills Dmitri's. At this the evil brother's rage increases, and he demands a ransom. Woldmar promises him the fairest of his slaves, and at that moment they perceive Nadeschda passing through the forest towards the castle. They regain their carriage, but these incidents have sufficed to throw Woldmar into a rage, and as they drive up through the ranks of gaily-dressed retainers, his eye catches one girl who has only a coil of straw in her hair and thistles for a girdle. He stops and shouts to her to come to him; it is Nadeschda. He storms at her for her disrespect, and swears she shall instantly marry the basest of his grooms; but she, glancing timidly at him, perceives that he is the lover of her dream, and she flushes rosy red with shame and sorrow. He falls under the spell of her beauty and loves her, even before he has finished his reproof. Dmitri also perceives her loveliness, and claims her as the ransom for his falcon. But Woldmar gives Nadeschda her freedom, and then brusquely turning to Dmitri, says that he only promised to give him a slave, and that this is a free woman. Dmitri, excessively piqued, sends out the same night to secure her, but she has disappeared, and he cannot discover what has become of her.

Two years are now supposed to pass, and we are presented to Nadeschda, a lovely and accomplished woman, who has been protected and educated in hiding by some

noble ladies, friends of Prince Woldmar. He comes to visit her, and we are given one of Runeberg's characteristic love-scenes, full of tenderness and highly-wrought passion. He explains to her that they have everything to fear from his mother's pride and his brother's jealousy. In the next canto, however, he has resolved to brave these dangers, and bringing Nadeschda to his castle, he is about to be privately married to her, when Prince Dmitri hears of it, and communicates with his mother, the Princess Natalia Feodorowna. The proud dowager determines that, sooner than her son shall marry a serf, she will herself denounce him to the Empress. We then have a very dramatic scene. Potemkin is presented lounging on a rich ottoman, and scolding General Kutusoff and other eminent soldiers for the laxity of their regiments: he has some insolent word for each, and finally bids them all to leave his presence, except Prince Woldmar. Potemkin charges him with his intended *mésalliance* as with a crime, tells him of the Empress's displeasure, sends him off forthwith to Tomsk, and gives his castle, with Nadeschda in it, into his mother's care. Nadeschda is turned out of doors, and returns to the hut of her foster-father Miljutin. Thither Dmitri follows her, expecting an easy conquest, but her dignity and her despair overcome him, and he consents to leave her unmolested. The Princess Natalia ruins the district with her tyrannies, and the serfs are in the last condition of destitution, when suddenly the Empress announces that she is coming to the castle to spend the night. To hide the desolation of the scene, the Princess has some painted semblances of

cottages set up along the opposite hill side, and when the Empress arrives, she is so pleased at this appearance of comfort that she insists on going to visit the cottagers themselves. The Princess is accordingly disgraced, Nadeschda throws herself at the Empress's feet and is pardoned, and Prince Woldmar returns to celebrate his marriage.

The position of Runeberg at Borgå became more and more firmly settled. In 1842 he was offered and accepted the chair of Greek. A third volume of lyrical poems, in 1843, and the cycle of romances entitled *Kung Fjalar*, in 1844, testified to the freshness and ascending vigour of his imagination. *Kung Fjalar*, in fact, marks the very apex of his powers; Runeberg never exceeded this tragic work in the admirable later creations of his brain. It has an audacity, an originality that raise it to the first order of lyric writing. It is very difficult, by making a cold-blooded analysis of such a poem, to give the reader the least notion of its beauty. The plot is as follows. A mythical king of Gauthiod, Fjalar, has fought many battles and won as many victories; his hair is silver, and he now determines to live at home in peace, and keep watch over the prosperity of his people. It is Christmas time, and there are revellings in Fjalar's castle. As his warriors gather round him, he tells them that he desires repose; he swears that by his own help, resting on his own will alone, he will lead the land up into wealth and happiness. As he makes this oath, an unknown stranger strides up the hall; he uncovers his face—it is Dargar the seer, the all-wise prophet, who hates Fjalar. He prophesies woe to Gauthiod and its king; and,

as a last sorrow, Fjalar is to see before he dies his only daughter locked in the burning embrace of his only son. At a curse so fearful, silence and consternation rule in the hall: no one dares to speak till Fjalar orders the nurse to bring Hjalmar and Gerda, his infant children. He takes one babe on each arm, not knowing which to sacrifice, till at last his warriors persuade him to leave the boy to reign after him. One of them, Sjolff, approaches, and lifting Gerda from the king's embrace, takes her out into the night, and flings her, "a laughing sacrifice," off the cliff into the roaring sea. Fjalar forbids her name to be mentioned again, and then walks out in silence. The next canto takes us twenty years onward. In the Ossianic kingdom of Morven the three sons of the king are all in love with his foster-daughter Oihonna, a lovely being mysteriously saved from the waves. Each of the sons tries to win her heart by a song. This is Gall's the eldest:—

"Come, Oihonna, follow my life!  
The hunter loves thee, rosy cloud!  
The tall prince of the mountains  
Prays thee to share his upland footways.

Hast thou seen from thy mountain rocks  
The broad expanses smile in the morning?  
Hast thou seen the wakening sunrise  
Drink the dew of the trembling haze?

Remember the sound of the windy woodlands,  
Leaves that stir in the wing of the wind,  
Birds' riot, and the intoxicate  
Brook that flies through the sounding boulders!

Dost thou know how beats the heart  
When to the noise of the horn and hounds  
Rustle the Lushes, and lo! the stag  
Checks his leap and is here before us?

Maiden, lov'st thou the sombre twilight  
That melts to the shine of the dewy stars?  
Come, from the summit of Mellmor  
Let us watch how the night is born.

O how oft have I sat on the mountain  
When in the west the sun has been closing  
His glimmering gates, and the red glow  
Slowly faded out of the sky.

I have drunk the cool of the spirit of even,  
Seen the shadows walk over the valleys,  
Let my thoughts go wander  
Around the sea of nightly silence.

Lovely is life on the cloudy heights,  
'Tis easy to breathe in the fragrant woods;  
Ah! be my bride! I will open  
A thousand pleasures around thy heart."<sup>1</sup>

So sings Gall the hunter, but in vain; nor can Rurmar the bard, nor Clesamor the warrior soften her crystal heart. Next we have a scene in which Oihonna, "the huntress of the swan-like arm," is hunting the deer in the valley of Lora, in company with her friend the singer Gylnandyne. She sings the saga which tells how Hjalmr desired his father, King Fjalar, to let him go a-viking, and how,

when the king would not, Hjalmar got away by stealth and won glory at sea. At this moment Oihonna is summoned back to Morven. When she arrives there, the Scotch king tells her of the circumstances of her coming to that land, how a captain, sailing one Christmas night by King Fjalar's castle, found a girl-child in the sea, brought her to Morven, and dying, bequeathed her to the king. Hjalmar, the terrible viking, now appears and attacks Morven. He fights with each of the sons of King Morannel in turn, and kills them; the youngest, Clesamor, fights so well that Morven trembles to hear a late half-dying echo from Ossian's heroic days, but falls at last. Morannel dies of grief in the arms of Oihonna. We then return to Gauthiod, where, from the heights above his castle, Fjalar, now extremely old, gazes in content and self-gratulation over the land that has prospered under his firm will and peaceful rule. He thinks of the old curse only to deride it, when suddenly the evil seer, Dargar, arrives, and denounces the king. The hour of the vengeance of the gods is, he says, at hand; and he points to a golden speck on the horizon, the dragon of Hjalmar returning across the sea. They watched the approaching fleet; the prows grate the shore, and Hjalmar slowly ascends the mountain with a bloody sword in his hand. He explains that from the court of Morven he bore off Oihonna, a lovely and a loving bride; that on their homeward voyage she told the story of her birth, and that he perceived her too late to be his sister. With the sword he holds he slew her, and now he slays himself before his father's throne. The sun goes

down, and when they turn to King Fjalar he is dead. Even from so slight an outline as this it may be seen how lofty a rendering this is of the old theme that wise men are powerless fighting against the gods. Fjalar is great, virtuous, and humane, but because he does not make the gods witnesses to his oath, he brings down upon himself and his race their slow but implacable vengeance. The style in which this poem is composed is exceedingly cold and severe, with delicate lyrical passages introduced without any detriment to the general solemnity. The work is like a noble frieze in marble, where among the sublime figures of the gods and their victims, the sculptor has sought to introduce an element of tenderer beauty in the flying graces of a garment or the innocent sweetness of a child's averted head.

We have now arrived at the work which did most to give Runeberg a name throughout all classes and in all the provinces of the North. It was in 1848 that he published the first series of *Fänrik Ståls Sägner* ("Ensign Stål's Stories"), a series of narrative poems dealing with the war of independence in 1808. The cycle professes to be said and sung by an old ensign, a veteran from the days of Döbeln and Adlercreutz, who recites to a young student all he can remember about the war. Similar stories Runeberg himself had heard, as a boy of sixteen, from an old corporal at Ruovesi. He himself, as we have said, dimly remembered seeing the Swedish and Russian armies pass through his birthplace, Jakobsstad. The publication of these national poems, breathing the full



perfume of patriotic regret, the mingled tone of war-song and of elegy, created such a sensation as is but poorly comparable with the success of Mr. Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*. The volume was such a one as Mr. Dobell's *England in Time of War* might have proved in the hands of a far saner and more judicious poet. The first series appeared in 1848, the second in 1860; and with one poem on the treacherous surrender of Sveaborg, which was suppressed at the supplication of the descendants of the traitor, there are thirty-five pieces in all. They are varied in subject and style; they describe every one, from the king and the generals down to village maidens and "drunken privates of the Buff." *Fänrik Ståls Sägner* opens with the famous hymn which has become the national anthem of Finland, "Vårt land, vårt land." This is one of the noblest strains of patriotic verse ever indited; it lifts Runeberg at once to the level of Callicles or Campbell, to the first rank of poets in whom art and ardour, national sentiment and power of utterance, are equally blended. Unhappily, in its crystal simplicity and its somewhat elaborate verse form, it is practically untranslatable. To enjoy it is one of the first and best rewards of him who takes the trouble to learn Swedish. The old Ensign is next described, and the events that led to his repeating these tales of his; and then the tales themselves begin. Some of the figures that stand out against the background of the war are of a marvellous freshness and realistic force. The stupid Sven Dufva, who had an heroic heart; Lieutenant Zidén, who cheered

on his little troop from Wasa; Wilhelm von Schwerin, the boy-hero; Otto von Fieandt, who uses his whip instead of a sword; General Adlercreutz fighting at Siikajoki. All are good; it may almost be said that not one is poor or weak. Perhaps the most exquisite, the most inimitable of all is "Soldatgossen," the boy whose father—a brave young soldier—fell at the battle of Lappo, and who is only longing to be fifteen years old that he may take up his rifle and go to fight the Russians. The absolute perfection of this poem, which it would be ruinous to fail to give, is too terrifying for a translator to attempt. Such a poem is like the strange draughts that Persian monarchs boasted; it takes its colour wholly from the vase that holds it, and would seem mere trash poured into a less cunning goblet. As a ballad less fine, and in a form less exacting, I venture to attempt a version of *Torp-flickan*:—

#### THE VILLAGE GIRL.

The sun went down and evening came, the quiet summer even,  
A mass of glowing purple lay between the farms and heaven;  
A weary troop of men went by, their day's hard labour done,  
Tired and contented, towards their home they wended one by one.

Their work was done, their harvest reaped, a goodly harvest truly,  
A well-appointed band of foes all slain or captured newly;  
At dawn against this armed band they had gone forth to fight,  
And all had closed in victory before the fall of night.

Close by the field where all day long the hard hot strife was raging,  
A cottage by the wayside stood, half-desolate and ageing,  
And on its worn low steps there sat a silent girl, and mused  
And watched the troop come slowly by, in weary line confused.

She looked like one who sought a friend, she scanned each man's face  
nearly.

High burned the colour in her cheek, too high for sunset merely:  
She sat so quiet, looked so warm, so flushed with secret heat,  
It seemed she listened as she gazed, and felt her own heart beat.

But as she saw the troop march by, and darkness round them stealing,  
To every file, to every man, her anxious eye appealing  
Seemed muttering in a shy distress a question without speech,  
More silent than a sigh itself, too anguished to beseech.

But when the men had all gone past, and not a word was spoken,  
The poor girl's courage failed at last, and all her strength was broken.  
She wept not loud, but on her hand her weary forehead fell,  
And large tears followed one by one as from a burning well.

“Why dost thou weep? For hope may break, just where the gloom  
is deepest!

O daughter, hear thy mother's voice, a needless tear thou weapest;  
He whom thy eyes were seeking for, whose face thou couldst not see,  
He is not dead: he thought of love, and still he lives for thee.

He thought of love; I counselled him to shield himself from danger,  
I taught him how to slip the fight, and leave them like a stranger;  
By force they made him march with them, but weep not, rave not thus,  
I know he will not choose to die from happy life and us.”

Shivering the maiden rose like one whom awful dreams awaken,  
As if some grim foreboding all her soul in her had shaken;  
She lingered not, she sought the place where late had raged the fight,  
And stole away and swiftly fled and vanished out of sight.

An hour went by, another hour, the night had closed around her;  
The moonshot clouds were silver-white, but darkness hung below  
them.

“She lingers long; O daughter, come, thy toil is all in vain,  
To-morrow, ere the dawn is red, thy bridegroom's here again!”

The daughter came; with silent steps she came to meet her mother,  
The pallid eyelids strained no more with tears she fain would smother;  
But colder than the wind at night the hand that mother pressed,  
And whiter than a winter cloud the maiden's cheek and breast.

"Make me a grave, O mother dear; my days on earth are over!  
The only man that fled to-day, that coward, was my lover;  
He thought of me and of himself, the battle-field he scanned,  
And then betrayed his brothers' hope and shamed his father's land.

When past our door the troop marched by, and I their ranks had  
numbered,

I wept to think that like a man among the dead he slumbered;  
I sorrowed, but my grief was mild, it had no bitter weight,  
I would have lived a thousand years to mourn his noble fate.

O mother, I have looked for him where'er the dead are lying,  
But none of all the stricken bear his features, calm in dying;  
Now will I live no more on earth in shame to sit and sigh,  
He lies not there among the dead, and therefore I will die."<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that in *Fänrik Ståls Sägner* Finland has presented Swedish literature with the most intimate, glowing, and original poetical work that it possesses. And it is very interesting to note how much of what is most notable in the history of Sweden has proceeded from this desolate and distant province, now hopelessly separated from the realm itself. In the annals of statecraft, of the church, of war, and of the navy, the names of Finns are singularly prominent. In literature, some of the leading writers in each century—Frese in the seventeenth, Creutz and Kellgren in the eighteenth,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix Y.

Franzén, Fredrika Bremer, and Zakris Topelius in the nineteenth—have been natives of Finland; but of all these Runeberg is the greatest. On May 13, 1848, the *Vårt Land*, to which music had been set by the greatest of Finnish composers, Pacius, was sung outside the city of Helsingfors, and the ringing tones of the new National Anthem were taken up by thousands of voices. This was the crowning day in the life of Runeberg.

By this time he had outlived the economical pressure of his earlier years. In 1844 he had been made titular Professor, and decorated with the order of the North Star by the King of Sweden, Oscar I. In 1847 he was unanimously elected Rector of the College of Borgå. In 1851 he achieved the only foreign journey he ever took—namely, a trip into Sweden, the great aim of which was a visit to the novelist, Almqvist. He entered Stockholm just in time to hear that this illustrious person, perhaps the first intellect which Sweden then possessed, had just taken flight for America under a charge of forgery and suspicion of murder. This startling catastrophe caused Runeberg a lively disappointment, which the Swedish Academy and its spokesman, Baron Beskow, did their best to remove by the cordiality of their welcome. Both in the capital and in Upsala he enjoyed the honours of a notable lion. At Upsala, however, he was thrown into the deepest melancholy by the constant necessity of answering the speeches made him on public occasions, for he was a very shy and poor speaker. He soon returned to Borgå, never to leave it again, hugging himself with the delight in home which so

often marks a man of his type of genius. He was now possessed of a handsome house, which it was his delight to fill with objects of art, for he posed as the first connoisseur in Finland. When he had originally settled in Borgå he had rented a very small and humble house in the outskirts of the town; and towards the end of his life he was fond of repeating a story which showed that this prophet at least was not without honour in his own country. For, walking in the lonely streets one moonlight night, he was struck with a desire to go and look at this little lodging where he had spent so many of his struggling days. He found it; there was a light in the window, and, peeping through the shutters, he saw an artisan busy over his work, and singing. He listened attentively; it was one of Runeberg's own songs, and the poet turned away with tears of pleasure in his eyes. From this time forward his life was extremely uneventful. In 1853 he collected his prose writings, and published them under the title of *Smärre Berättelser*. In 1857, as president of the committee to select a National Psalter, he published a *Psalm-book for the use of Evangelico-Lutheran Congregations in Finland*, to which he contributed sixty-two psalms of his own composition. A second series of *Ensign Stål's Tales* appeared in 1860, and he closed his long literary career with the production of two dramatic works,—*Kan ej* ("Can't"), a comedy in rhyme, performed and published in 1862; and *Kungarne på Salamis* ("The Kings at Salamis"), a tragedy in the manner of Sophocles. This last is one of his noblest works, combining the Attic severity with the modern poet's

realism and truth of detail. It resembles Mr. Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* or Lord de Tabley's *Philoctetes* more closely than what the continental poets usually give us as revivals of the antique tragedy. The metre in which it is written is closely modelled on what the Swedish poet has conceived to be the tragic measure of the Greeks, the Sophoclean trimeter.

When, in 1870, Professor Nyblom, in editing the works of Runeberg, issued a biographical notice which still remains the chief storehouse of information, the poet was already in very weak and precarious health. As late, however, as April 1877, he was well enough to publicly congratulate his old friend and fellow-poet Cygnæus on attaining his seventieth birthday. But he was taken ill very shortly after, and on the afternoon of Sunday, May 6, 1877, he passed away in his seventy-fourth year. He has left many disciples behind him, and in his friend and follower, Topelius, Sweden once more borrows from Finland her most prominent living poet. The influence of Runeberg on the literature of his time has been healthy and vigorous. In Talis Qualis, who survived him only a few weeks, he found in Sweden itself a quick and strong imagination lighted at the lamp of his own. The present King of Sweden, Oscar II., in his excellent poem of *Svenska flottans minnen*, has shown himself a scholar of the great Finnish realist. In Carl Snoilsky, the latest product of Swedish poetry, we find another side of Runeberg's genius, the artistic and classic, laid under the contribution of discipleship, although the main current of

this last writer's lyrical work flows in a more modern and a more intense channel, and proves him the more direct disciple of the great Danish lyrist, Christian Winther. We know as yet little of Runeberg's life, little of the inward development of his great powers. A collection of his posthumous writings, as well as an exhaustive biography, will be welcomed by every lover of his noble verse.

1878.



## *THE DANISH NATIONAL THEATRE.*

THE only instance in which unfamiliar forms of culture have a claim on public attention is when they are wholly original and individual. The development of the ages is now too vast for men to spare much time in the study of what is merely imitative, and even reproductions of ancient phases of art and literature must now be very excellent or very vigorous, to succeed in arresting general interest. But art is no respecter of persons, and merit in nations, as in individuals, is still not measured by wealth or size; and it sometimes happens even in these days that what is most worthy of attention is to be discovered in narrow and impoverished circles of men, the light of genius burning all the clearer for the atmospheric compression in which it is forced to exist. Of modern peoples none has displayed the truth of this fact more notably than Denmark, a country so weak and poor, so isolated among inimical races, so forlorn of all geographical protection, that its very place among nations seems to have been preserved by a series of accidents, and which yet has been able, by the brilliance of the individual men of genius it has produced, to keep its distinct and honourable place in the world of science and letters during a century and a half of perilous struggle for existence. There is not another of the minor countries of

Europe that can point to names so universally illustrious in their different spheres as Örsted, Thorwaldsen, Oehenschläger, Madvig, H. C. Andersen. The labours of these men, by nature of their craft, speak to all cultivated persons; the electro-magnetic discoveries of Örsted tinge all modern habits of life; the fairy-stories of Andersen make an enchanted land of every well-conducted nursery. These men have scarcely influenced thought in their own land more strongly than they have the thought of Europe. But I purpose here to speak a little of a form of culture which has penetrated no less deeply into the spiritual life of Denmark, and which by its very nature is restricted in its workings to the native intelligence.

Of all the small nations of Europe, Denmark is the only one that has succeeded in founding and preserving a truly national dramatic art. One has but to compare it in this respect with the surrounding lands of a cognate character, with Sweden, Norway, Holland, to perceive at once the complete difference of individuality. In all these countries one finds, to be sure, what is called a Royal Theatre, but on examining the *répertoire* one is sure at once to find the bulk of acting plays to be translations or adaptations. If the popular taste is sentimental, the tendency will be towards Iffland and Kotzebue, tempered with a judicious selection from Shakspeare and Schiller; if farcical, perhaps native talent will be allowed to compete with adaptations from Scribe, while the gaps will be filled up with vaudevilles and operettas translated from the French, and set on the stage purely to give employment to the gregarious multitude

that sing tolerably and act most intolerably. In such a depressing atmosphere as this the stage can hardly be said to exist; what poetical talent the nation possesses pours itself into other channels, and sometimes a theatre is found stranded in a position of such hopeless incompetence, that it is ready to adopt the masterpieces of the contemporary English drama.

But the old dingy theatre that was pulled down in Copenhagen in 1874 had another tale to tell than such a dreary one. For within its walls almost all that is really national and individual in the poetic literature of the country had found at one time or another its place and voice. Within the walls that now no more will ever display their faded roses and smoky garlands to the searching flare of the footlights, almost every Danish poet of eminence—with the exception of Grundtvig and Winther, perhaps every one—had received the plaudits of the people, and been taken personally into the sympathy of the nation in a way no mere study-writer ever can be taken. Perhaps this is why the Danes preserve such an astonishing personal love for their dead poets. Men who had seen the white, sick face of Ewald grow whiter under the storms of applause, and the long thin fingers press the aching brow in an agony of nervous agitation; the next generation that saw Oehlen-schläger, handsome and burly, in his stall, receive the plaudits like a comfortable burgess, one of themselves; the younger men that knew the haughty, keen face of Heiberg, master of all the best æsthetic culture that his age could give, yet a Dane in every feature, and a type to every

romantic youth of what a Dane should be—these men had a sense of being a living part and parcel of the national poetic life such as no citizens have had save at Athens, and Florence, and Weimar; and their sympathy has been so far wider than these, that it was not the emotion of a single circle, however brilliant, of a single city, however potent, but of a whole nation not potent or brilliant at all, but beating to the heart's core with that warm blood of patriotism that has sent its men, again and again, to certain, hopeless death with cheerful resignation.

It is this living force in the dramatic art of Denmark that makes it worthy of study. No lyric or scenic excellence in native writers, no glittering and costly ornament, could have secured to the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen the wonderful influence that it has had over public life, if it had not in some way been able to stand as the representative of the best national life of the country. It is this that gives it a unique place in the history of the modern drama. In Copenhagen the stage has been, what it has not for centuries been in London, the organ by which poetry of the highest class speaks to the masses. The nearest parallel to the position of the Danish Theatre is found amongst ourselves in the new-born popularity of concerts of classical music. Just as crowds throng to hear the elaborate and delicate harmonies of Beethoven and Schumann, till one is set wondering how much of this is habit and fashion, and how much appreciation of the noblest art, so in Copenhagen is one astonished and puzzled to see crowded audiences, night after night, receive with applause dramatic poems that take a place

among the most exquisite and subtle works in the language.

Nor is the position of the theatre as a means of widely popularising the higher culture the only or the main service it performs; it is a school for patriotism. Here the people hear their native tongue spoken most purely and most beautifully, and the peculiar character of the ablest plays on the boards gives the audience an opportunity of almost breathing a condensed air of love for the Fatherland. The best Danish comedies, the old-fashioned but still popular pieces of Holberg, deal almost wholly with life in Copenhagen; and after the lapse of one hundred and fifty years, the satire in them which lashes an affectation of German taste and German fashion is as welcome and as fresh as ever; the most popular tragedies are those of Oehlenschläger, almost without exception occupied with the mythic or the heroic life of early Scandinavia; the later dramas of Heiberg mingle poetic romance with life out in the woods and by the lakes of Zealand; while the farces of Hostrup never stray outside the walls of Copenhagen, but point out to a keenly-appreciative audience the ludicrous side of the men and women that jostle them hourly in the familiar, homely streets. In a community so small that almost everybody knows everybody else, a copious literature studded with local allusion becomes as intensely interesting to the populace as the *vers de société* of a witty poet become to his circle of admirers and butts; and when the interest thus awakened is led to concentrate itself on topics of the gravest national importance, art approaches its apotheosis,

and nears the fulfilment of its highest aim. In fact, if a foreign power secured Copenhagen and understood the temper of the people, its first act would undoubtedly be to shut for an indefinite period the doors of the Royal Theatre.

The ugly old theatre that has just been pulled down to make room for a splendid successor was a disgrace to Kongens Nytorv, the handsome central square of Copenhagen, and its area had long been quite unable to offer comfortable sitting room to the audience. It was well that it should be pulled down and a better house be opened; but in the moment of destruction a thought of gratitude seemed due to the building that had seen so many triumphs of art, so many brilliant poetical successes, and had so large a share in the best life of the country. It was one of the oldest theatres in Europe, having reached the age, most unusual in this class of houses, of one hundred and twenty-six years. In Paris, where dramatic art has so lovingly been studied, and where the passion for scenic representation was so early developed, only two out of the thirty or more theatres now open date from the last century—the Théâtre Français from 1782, and the Théâtre Porte St. Martin from 1781. The latter suffered so severely under the Commune in 1871, that it hardly comes into the category. Here in London almost all the theatres date, in their present position, from later than 1800, although several of the most important occupy the same classical ground as houses that have been destroyed by fire. This greatest enemy of theatres has wonderfully spared the stage at

Copenhagen, where the Royal Theatre, built in 1748, contrived to last till our own day, to undergo the more ignominious fate of being pulled stone from stone.

When Eigtved, the architect, finished it in 1748, it was not the eyesore that it had been of late years ; it was considered an adornment to that very Kongens Nytorv that lately groaned under its hideousness. But the growth of the audience, the necessity of more machinery and more furniture, at various times obliged the management to throw out frightful fungus-growths, to heave up the roof, and make all manner of emendations that destroyed the last vestiges of shapeliness. It was the first theatre where the Danish drama found a firm place to settle in ; and after doubtful and dangerous sojourns in Grønnegade and other places, this secure habitation was a great step forward. It seated, however, only eight hundred spectators ; and although the decorations and machinery were so magnificent that a performance was announced gratis, merely that there might be an opportunity of impressing society with a Mercury on clouds, and Night brought on in an airy chariot drawn by two painted horses, still a modern audience might have grumbled at having to spend an evening, or rather an afternoon—for the performances began at 5 P.M.—in the old building. The stage was lit up by tallow candles, which had to be briskly snuffed by a special attendant ; the orchestra could only muster ten pieces, and the wardrobe suffered from a complaint the most terrible for green-rooms—poverty of costumes.

The heart and soul of the management was Holberg, that most gifted of all Danes before or since, who more than any other man has succeeded in lifting his country into an honourable place among the nations. If it be true, as has been said, that Goethe created for Germany the rank it holds in the literature of Europe, much more true is it that Denmark owes to Holberg what rank she has succeeded in attaining. This remarkable man played so important a rôle in the dramatic life of the early times of which we speak, that a few words seem demanded here on his life and personal character. He was born, like so many other men who have made a name in Denmark, in Norway, in 1684. When he was eighteen he came up to study at the University of Copenhagen, and, being left almost entirely destitute, was thrown on the resources of his own talents. Wandering all over the north of Europe, he came at last to Oxford, where he lived for two years, studying at the University, and subsisting in the meanwhile by teaching languages and music. After years of extraordinary adventures, including a journey on foot from Brussels to Marseilles, a narrow escape from the Inquisition at Genoa, and a return journey on foot from Rome over the Alps to Amsterdam, he settled in Copenhagen about the year 1716. Already a great part of his historical works were written, and he gave himself now to law and to philology. His name became generally famous in Denmark as that of a brilliant writer on the subjects just mentioned, but no one suspected that a series of comic poems, published under the pseudonym of Hans Mikkelsen, and over which



Copenhagen became periodically convulsed with laughter, were produced by the grave Professor of Latin Eloquence. From 1716 to 1722 he successfully preserved his authorship a secret from the world ; but when a circle of those friends to whom his humorous genius was known besought him to try to write for the Danish stage comedies that should banish French adaptations from the theatrical *répertoire*, in assenting he took a place before the public as a comic poet which has outshone all his reputation in science and history, bright as that still is. Until then Copenhagen had possessed a German and a French, but no Danish theatre. The first of Holberg's Danish comedies that was produced was the *Pewterer turned Politician* ("Den politiske Kandestöber"), a piece that recalls somewhat the style of Ben Jonson in the *Alchemist*, but which for the rest is so wholly original, so happily constructed in plot, so exquisitely funny in evolution, that it is one of the most remarkable works ever produced in Scandinavia. Had Molière never lived, the genius of Holberg would have proved itself superhuman : but the fact is that the Danish poet, in the course of his travels, had had opportunity to study the French comedian thoroughly, and had adopted the happy notion of satirising affectation and vice in Copenhagen, not in the same but in a parallel way with that adopted by Molière in lashing Parisian society. In consequence, the series of Holberg's dramas display no imitation, but a general similarity of method, while the precise nature of the wit is characteristic only of himself. These comedies so far belong to the school represented

among ourselves by Ben Jonson, and in our own day by Dickens, that the source of amusement is not found in intrigue, nor mainly in the development of the plot, but in the art of bringing prominently forward certain oddities of character, which in the Shakspearian time were called "humours." Holberg's loving study of the French drama preserved him from the temptation of exaggerating these studies of eccentric character into caricature; the odd lines are just deepened a little beyond what nature commonly presents, and that is all. These comedies show no signs of losing their freshness. They are as popular on the stage to-day as they were one hundred and fifty years ago, and compared with those English plays that just preceded them, from Wycherley to Colley Cibber, they appear astonishingly modern, and as superior in humour as they are in morality and decency; whereas Holberg's comic epics and lyrics have long ago gone the way of most such writing, and are honourably unread in every gentleman's library.

The thirty Holbergian comedies formed the nucleus of the Danish drama. It was in 1722, before the actors had found a home in Kongens Nytorv, that the *Pewterer turned Politician* was produced, and the rest followed in quick succession. Some remarks in one of them against the German tendencies of the ministry then in power had the effect of bringing upon Holberg the displeasure of men in authority; an attempt was made to burn the play publicly, together with another peccant book of Holberg's, the comic epic of *Peder Paars*, and to punish the author. Fortunately, King Frederick IV. took the poet's part, and

this incident only served to intensify popular interest in dramatic representations.

When the Royal Company flitted over to Kongens Nytorv in 1748 Holberg was the heart and soul of the new enterprise. The *répertoire* consisted almost entirely of his own comedies, and of translations of the best pieces of Molière. He was fortunate enough to secure in Clementin and Londemann two interpreters whose traditions still cling about the stage, and whose genius, if we may trust the reports of contemporary writers, was in the highest degree suited to set the creations of the great humorist in the broadest and wittiest manner before an audience that had to be educated into appreciation. The memory of these two men is so far interesting to us, as there seems no doubt that it is to them and to their great master that we owe the chaste and judicious style in acting which still characterises the Danish stage. A stranger from London, we will not say from Paris, is struck in Copenhagen by the wonderful reserve and poetical repose that characterises the general tone of the acting; no one is permitted to rave and saw the air; it is preferred to lose a little in sensation if thereby something can be gained in completeness. The great merit nowadays of Danish acting is not the supreme excellence of a single performance so much as the intelligence of the whole company, and the happy way in which all the important parts are individually made to build up the general harmony of effect. This chastity of art has come down as a tradition from Clementin and Londemann, and for

this, if for nothing else, they deserve a moment's recollection.

In 1771 the Royal Theatre entered upon a fresh and fortunate epoch. It became a pensioner of Government, and at the same time received its first important enlargement. This crisis was simultaneous with two events of literary importance. One was the production of the lyrical dramas of Johannes Ewald, the poet who composed the well-known national hymn—

“ King Christian stood by the high mast,”

and who composed, lying on his back in bed dying, like Heine, by inches, some of the masterpieces of Danish dramatic literature; and the other was the production of a single play, so unique in its character that it is worth while to pause a few minutes to discuss it. In the course of fifty years no poet had risen up whose talents in any way fitted him to carry on the war against affectation that Holberg had fought so bravely and so successfully. The comedies of that author, however, still kept the stage, and the particular forms of folly satirised by them had long ago died and faded into thin air. But affectation has a thousand hydra-heads, and if a Hercules annihilate one there are nine hundred and ninety-nine left. The craving after German support and German fashion was indeed dead in 1772, but another fearful craving had taken its place, a yearning after the stilted and beperiwigged chivalry that passed for good manners and good taste in

France, or rather on the French heroic stage. To act in real life like the heroes of the tragedies of Voltaire was the universal bourgeois ideal in Copenhagen, and to write as much as possible in alexandrines the apex of good taste. *Zaire* was the model for a romantic Danish lady. This rococo taste had penetrated to the theatre, where the nobility and the court had introduced it after the death of Holberg. Voltaire had been translated and imitated with great popular success; and when the Royal Theatre was opened anew after its enlargement, a native tragedy by the court poet, Nordahl Brun, was performed on the opening night. This production, which out-Alzired *Alzire*, was the finishing touch given to the exotic absurdity. A young man, who had hitherto been known only as the president of a kind of club of wits, rose up and with one blow slew this rouged and ruffled creature. His name was Wessel, and the weapon he used was a little tragedy called *Love without Stockings*.

The title was quite *en règle*; *Love without Hope*, *Love without Fortune*, *Love without Recompense*, all these are familiar; and why not *Love without Stockings*? The populace thronged to see this novelty, and *Zaire* and *Zarine* and all the other fantastic absurdities faded away in a roar of universal laughter. *Love without Stockings* is in some respects unique in literature. The only thing I know that is in any way parallel to it is the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*; and it differs from that inasmuch as that, while the *Rehearsal* parodies certain individual pieces of Dryden and others, Wessel's play is a parody of a whole

class of dramas.<sup>1</sup> *Love without Stockings!* Cannot one love without possessing stockings? Certainly not, answers Wessel; at all events, not in the age of knee-breeches. And out of this thought he develops a plot wholly in accordance with the arbitrary rules of French tragedy, with the three unities intact, with a hero and his friend, a heroine and her confidante, with a Fate that pursues the lovers, with their struggle against it, their fall and tragic death. And the whole is worked out in the most pathetic alexandrines, and with a pompous, ornate diction. At the same time, while he adheres strictly to the rules of French tragedy, he does so in such a manner as to make these rules in the highest degree ridiculous, and to set the faults of this kind of writing in the very plainest light. The wedding-day of the two lovers has arrived; all is ready, the priest is waiting, the bride is adorned, but alas! the bridegroom, who is a tailor, has no stockings, or, at all events, no white ones. What can he do? Buy a pair? But he has no money. Borrow a pair of his bride? On the one hand, it would not be proper; on the other, his legs are too thin. But his rival is rich, is the possessor of many pairs of white stockings; the lover fights a hard battle, or makes out that he does, between virtue and love—but love prevails, and he steals a pair. Adorned in them he marches off to the church with his bride, but on the way the larceny is discovered, and the rival holds him up to

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the closest English analogue is Henry Carey's *Dragon of Wantley*, the fun of which was so potent against the Italian opera in 1738.

public disgrace. For one moment the hero is dejected, and then, recalling his heroic nature, he rises to the height of the situation and stabs himself with a pocket-knife. The bride follows his example, then the rival, then the confidante, then the friend; and the curtain goes down on a scene in the approved tragic manner. The purity of the language, and the exactitude with which not only the French dramas, but the Italian arias then so much in vogue, were imitated, secured an instant success for this parody, which took a place that it has ever since retained among the classics of its country. The French tragedy fell; an attempt to put Nordahl Brun's *Zarine* on the boards again was a signal failure, and the painted Muse fled back to her own Gallic home.

The wonderful promise of *Love without Stockings* was scarcely fulfilled. Wessel wrote nothing more of any great importance, and in a few years both he and Ewald were dead. The death-blow, however, that the first had given to pompous affectation, and the stimulus lent by the second to exalted dramatic writing, brought forward several minor writers, whose very respectable works have scarcely survived them, but who helped to set Danish literature upon a broad and firm basis. The theatre in Kongens Nytorv took a new lease of vitality, and, after expelling the French plays, set itself to turn out a worse cuckoo-fledgling that had made itself a nest there—the Italian Opera. This institution, with all its disagreeable old traditions, with its gang of castrati and all its attendant aliens, pressed hard upon the comfort and welfare of native art, and it was determined to have

done with it. The Italians were suddenly sent about their business, and with shrill screams brought news of their discomfiture to Dresden and Cologne. Then for the first time the Royal Theatre found space to breathe, and since then no piece has been performed within its walls in any other language than Danish. When the present writer heard Gluck's opera of *Iphigenia in Tauris* sung there some years ago with infinite delicacy and finish, it did not seem to him that any charm was lost through the fact that the libretto was in a language intelligible to all the hearers. To supply the place of the banished Opera, the Danes set about producing lyrical dramas of their own. In the old Hartmann, grandfather to the now living composer of that name, a musician was found whose settings of Ewald have had a truly national importance. The airs from these operas of a hundred years ago live still in the memory of every boy who whistles. From this moment the Royal Theatre passed out of its boyhood into a confident manhood, or at least into an adolescence which lasted without further crisis till 1805.

It was in that year that the young and unknown poet, Adam Oehlenschläger, wearing out a winter in Germany under all the worst pangs of nostalgia, found in the University Library at Halle a copy of the Icelandic of Snorre Sturleson's *Heimskringla*. The event was as full of import to Scandinavian literature as Luther's famous discovery of the Bible was to German liberty. In Oehlenschläger's own words, he read the forgotten classic as one reads a packet of new-found letters from the dearest friend



of one's youth ; and when he reached *Hakon Jarl's Saga* in his reading, he laid the folio aside, and in a kind of ecstasy sat down to write a tragedy on that subject, which was the first fruits of a new epoch, and destined to revolutionise poetic literature, not in Denmark only, but throughout the North.

To follow the development of Oehlenschläger's genius would take us too far from our present inquiry, and belongs rather to the history of poetry proper than to that of the Danish theatre. It suffices to point out that the real addition to national dramatic art given by these tragedies was that the whole subject-matter of them was taken from the legendary history of the race. Instead of borrowing themes from Italian romance or German tradition, this poet took his audience back to the springs of their own thought and legend ; in the sagas of Iceland he found an infinite store of material for tragic dramas in which to develop emotions kindred to the people in whose language they were clothed, and to teach the unfailing lesson of patriotism to a nation that had almost forgotten its own mediæval glories. In place of the precious sticklers for the unities, Oehlenschläger set before his eyes Shakspeare for a model ; but his worship was less blind than that of the German romanticists, and did not lead him into extravagance so wild as theirs. In later years, when he passed from the influence of Goethe, he fell into a looser and more florid style ; but in his earlier dramas he is, perhaps, the coldest and most severe playwright that has ever succeeded in winning the popular ear.<sup>1</sup> So intent was he

<sup>1</sup> There can be no question that the early decadence of Oehlen-

on insisting on the heroic, primal forms of life, so careless of what was merely sentiment and adornment, that he presents in one of his most famous tragedies, *Pulnatøke*, the unique spectacle of a long drama, in which no female character is introduced. It was not intentionally so; simply Oehlenschläger forgot to bring a woman into his plot. He rewarded the patience of the public by dedicating his next play, *Axel and Valborg*, entirely to romantic love. The success of this piece on the stage was so great, that, as the poet was away from Copenhagen and wished the printing to be delayed, large sums were given for MS. copies, and a clerk busied himself day after day in writing out the verses for enthusiastic playgoers. As it was seventy years ago with fashionable people, so is it to this day with every boy and maiden. The fame of Oehlenschläger, like that of Walter Scott amongst ourselves, has broadened and deepened, even while it has somewhat passed out of the recognition of the cultivated classes. It is usual nowadays, in good society, to vote Oehlenschläger a trifle old-fashioned; but for every thoughtful boy his tragedies are the very basis upon which his first ideas of culture are built up; they are to him the sum and crown of poetry, while all other verses seem but offshoots and imitations; they are to him what bread is among the necessities of life. He measures the other poets that he learns to know, by Oehlenschläger, but there is no one by whom he dreams of

schläger's genius was mainly due to the absurd excess of laudation showered upon him in Denmark. He rose again, for one moment, in 1742, to the height of his power, in the tragedy of *Dina*.

measuring him ; he looks at him as the sun of their planet-circle, and he knows nothing yet of any other solar system. Just as these tragedies are the foundation of a Dane's education, so for the Danish stage they have always been, and will remain, the foundation of everything that the theatre can offer of serious drama, the very corner-stone of the whole edifice : and, rightly enough, an ambitious actor's first desire is to fit himself for the performance of the heroic parts in these, the manner and style being already traditional.

The strings that Oehlenschläger touched had never before been heard in Denmark ; he led his audience into a world of thought and vision where its feet had never stood before, and he spoke in a language that had never yet been declaimed from behind the footlights. It was not, therefore, wonderful that some years went by before a school of actors arose whose powers were adequate to the burden of these new dramas, and who could be the poet's worthy interpreters. Without such interpreters the tragedies of Oehlenschläger might have passed from the stage into the library, and their great public function never have been fulfilled. But as early as 1813, in Ryge, a man of superb histrionic genius, an actor, was found wholly worthy to bear the weight of such heroic parts as Hakon Jarl and Palnatoke ; some years afterwards Nielsen and his celebrated wife began to share the glory, and the palmy days of Danish acting set in. Fru Nielsen was the Mrs. Siddons of the Danish stage ; in her highly-strung sensibility, native magnificence of manner, and passionate grace, she was exactly suited to give the correct

interpretation to Oehlenschläger's queenly but rather cold heroines.

The next event in the Royal Theatre was the introduction of Shakspeare, but unfortunately he did not arrive alone. The newly-awakened sense for what was lofty and pathetic sought for itself satisfaction in the dreadful dramas of the German *Sturm und Drang Periode*, and threatened to lose its reason completely in the rant and bluster of melodrama. Again the popular sanity was rescued from its perils. We have seen the Danish drama created by the comedies of Holberg, and then fall into the snare of pseudo-classic tragedy; we have seen it saved from this wrinkled and mincing foe by a single scathing parody, and then subside gradually into a condition of tameness and triviality. Out of this we have seen it suddenly lifted into the zenith of the poetical heavens by the genius of Oehlenschläger; and now we find it tottering dizzily, and ready to fall into some humiliating abyss. It does not fall, but is carried lightly down into the atmosphere of common life on the wings of a mild and homely muse. Hitherto the stage had been forced to adapt itself to the poet's caprices; it found in 1825 a poet who would mould himself to its needs and exigencies. Heiberg understood how to bring all forms of scenic individuality into his service; for the descendants of Holberg he provided laughter, for the interpreters of Oehlenschläger parts that displayed the mild enthusiasm of Scandinavian romanticism. Above all, he possessed the art of setting an audience in good humour at the outset; his most serious dramas had some easy-going prologue, in

which good, honest Copenhageners found themselves lightly laughed at, and their own darling haunts and habits portrayed with a humour that was wholly sympathetic. And, having at his hand more than one young composer of enthusiasm and talent, and being from the first a passionate admirer of the Swedish airs of Bellman, he brought music and dancing into his plays in a way that the audience found ravishing, and that filled the house as it had never been filled before. His success combined with it that of his intimate friend, Hertz, whose southern imagination and passion flowed out in plays that brought an element of richness and colour into Danish dramatic art that had always been lacking before. Heiberg's wife became the first actress of her time; and these three friends contrived for a long succession of years to hold the reins in all matters regarding the theatre, and in measure, also, to govern public taste in general questions of art and literature.

These two poets are both dead; Fru Heiberg still lives in honoured age, the centre still of a keenly critical circle. The influence of Heiberg and Hertz on popular feeling in Denmark has been extraordinary; in a larger country it could not have been so powerful, being, as it was, almost wholly critical and of a peculiarly delicate type. The average cultivated Dane nowadays is very much what Heiberg has made him; that is, one of the most refined, fastidious, and superficially cultivated men of his class in Europe, but wholly incapable of creating new forms of art, and so perfectly satisfied with its past that he has no curiosity for its future. The only new class of drama produced in Denmark in our own time

is the farces of Hostrup, pieces that belong to the "cup and saucer" school, and are very much what Robertson would have written, if Robertson had happened to be born a poet. Let us hope that the new house will bring forward new writers, and that the period of lethargy and reaction after the last outburst of poetry is nearly over.

An account of the Danish Royal Theatre would be very imperfect without some notice of a form of art which borrows no aid directly from poetry, but which has developed itself in a quite unique manner at Copenhagen. Already in the middle of the last century, under the direction of Galeotti, the ballet was made a prominent feature on the boards of the Royal Theatre; and from the records of that time we learn that it already began to be regarded with a seriousness that has hardly been afforded to it elsewhere. However, it was not until about fifty years ago that it took the peculiar form which it now holds, and which gives it a national importance. If one can fancy an old Greek in whose brain the harmonious dances of a divine festival still throbbed, waking suddenly to find himself settled in this commonplace century as dancing-master at the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen, one can form some notion of the personality of Bournonville. This poet, to whom the gift of words seems to have been denied, has retained instead the most divine faculty for devising intricate and exquisite dances, and for framing stories of a dramatic kind, in which all the action is performed in dumb show, and consists of a succession of mingled tableaux and dances. These dumb poems—in

the severely intellectual character of which the light and trivial pettiness of what all the rest of Europe calls a ballet is forgotten—are mostly occupied with scenes from the mythology and ancient history of Scandinavia, or else reflect the classicism of Thorwaldsen, with whose spirit Bournonville is deeply imbued. No visitor to Copenhagen should miss the opportunity of seeing one of these beautiful pieces, the best of all, perhaps, being *Thrymskviden* (the "Lay of Thrym," a giant king), to which Hartmann had set the wildest, most magical music conceivable. Certain scenes in this ballet remain on the mind as visions of an almost ideal loveliness. The piece is occupied with the last days of the *Æsir*, the gods of heathen Scandinavia, against whom, it will be remembered, betrayed by Loki, the Evil God, one of themselves, the powers of darkness and chaos rose, and who sank to destruction in the midst of a general conflagration of the universe. When once the natural disappointment that follows the discovery of these colossal figures of the imagination dwarfed to human proportions has subsided, the vigour and liveliness of the scenes, the truly poetic conceptions, the grace and originality of the dances, surprise and delight one to the highest degree; and the vivid way in which the dumb poem is made to interpret its own development is worthy of particular attention, the insipidity of ordinary ballet-plots giving all the more piquancy to the interest of this.

It cannot be wholly without value to us to be made aware of the success of other nations in fields where we have been notoriously unsuccessful ourselves. Without

falling into any of the jeremiads that have only been too plentiful of late years, we may soberly confess that our own theatres have long ceased to be a school for poetic education, or influential in any way as leaders of popular thought or taste. They have not attempted to claim any moral or political power; they have existed for amusement only, and now, in the eyes of most cultivated persons, they have ceased even to amuse. Over the drop-scene at the Royal Theatre at Copenhagen there stands in large gold letters this inscription: "Ej blot til Lyst"—*not merely for enjoyment*: and in these simple words may be read the secret of its unique charm and the source of its power. It has striven, not prudishly or didactically, but in a broad and healthy spirit, to lead the popular thought in high and ennobling directions. It has not stooped to ask the lowest of its auditors how near the edges of impropriety, how deep into the garbage of vulgarity and slang, how high in the light air of triviality it dared to go; it has not interpreted comedy by farce, not turned tragedy into melodrama, nor dirtied its fingers with burlesque, but has adapted itself as far as possible meekly and modestly, to the requirements of the chastity of art, and has managed for a century and a half to support a school of original actors and a series of national plays without borrowing traditions or dramas from its neighbours. Denmark is an extremely insignificant country; but that exemplary insect, the ant, is also small, and yet the wisest of men deigned to recommend it to human attention.



## *FOUR DANISH POETS.*

THE revival of romantic poetry in Denmark was almost exactly coeval with the movement of Wordsworth and Coleridge amongst ourselves, and in each case the introduction of a somewhat poor and inartistic element from Germany was the immediate cause of the development of a rare, vigorous, and many-sided poetic art. In Denmark, two Scandinavian exiles brought romanticism back with them on their return; of these one was a philosopher, Henrik Steffens, the other was a poet, Schack-Staffeldt. These persons did for their country not only what Coleridge did for England, but what he proposed to do. In theory and practice, by stirring lectures and by exquisite lyrics, they pointed their countrymen to the value of abstract and mystic thought, and in the same dreamy spirit to the popular legends and ancient mythology of their country. Steffens indeed was met by public disapproval, but in private discussion he lit the ambition of Oehlenschläger and Grundtvig, and a new epoch commenced. To chronicle the bare facts of the fertile and brilliant period that ensued, merely to enumerate works of all the romantic poets from Schack-Staffeldt to Paludan-Müller, would need more than one volume. The efflorescence of Danish poetry lasted about half a century, from

1800 to 1850, and in this short space of time the valuable part of the literature of Denmark was trebled in bulk. I have thought it might be of some interest, and not unsuited to the limited space at my command, if I gave a rapid sketch of the characteristics of four deceased poets, widely divergent from one another, each of the highest eminence in his own line, and with each of whom it has been my privilege to come into some measure of personal intercourse. These four were the last<sup>1</sup> survivors of a race of intellectual giants, the tradition of whose prestige will long give Denmark an honourable prominence among the nations of Northern Europe.

## I.

It was on the last Sunday of July 1872 that I set out to hear Bishop Grundtvig preach in the little workhouse chapel, called the Vartou, opposite the trees and still waters of the western ramparts of Copenhagen. I had much desired for some time past to satisfy the curiosity I felt to see the oldest poet, certainly, then alive in Europe but my friends were of the orthodox party in the Church, and some little difficulty was made. However, the amiability of my host overcame his scruples as a rival theologian, and we set out together. We found seats with difficulty, for the chapel was crowded with communicants, the day being of special importance among the sect. After sitting more than half-an-hour, surrounded by strange

<sup>1</sup> I do not forget Christian Winther, but regard him as the first of a new school rather than as the last of the old.

fanatic faces, and women who swung themselves to and fro in silent prayer, it seemed to be decided that the Bishop was unable to come, and we began to sing hymns in the loud, quick, joyous manner invented by the poet, and very different from the slow singing in the state churches. Suddenly, and when we had given up all hope, there entered from the vestry and walked rapidly to the altar a personage who seemed to me the oldest man I had ever seen. He prayed in a few words that sounded as if they came from underground, and then he turned and exhorted the communicants in the same slow, dull voice. He stood beside me for a moment as he laid his hands on a girl's head, and I saw his face to perfection. For a man of ninety he could not be called infirm, but the attention was drawn less to his vitality, great as it was, than to his appearance of excessive age. He looked like a troll from some cave in Norway; he might have been centuries old.

From the vast orb of his bald head, very long silky hair, perfectly white, fell over his shoulders, and mingled with a long and loose white beard. His eyes flamed under very beetling brows, and they were the only part of his face that seemed alive, even when he spoke. His features were still shapely, but colourless and dry, like parchment. I never saw so strange a head. When he rose into the pulpit, and began to preach, and in his dead voice warned us all to beware of false spirits, and to try every spirit, he looked very noble, but the nobility was scarcely Christian. In the body of the church he had

reminded me of a troll; in the pulpit he looked more like some forgotten Druid, that had survived from Mona and could not die. It is rare indeed to hear any man preach a sermon at ninety, and perhaps unique for that man to be also a great poet. Had I missed seeing him then, I should never have seen him; for he took to his bed next day, and within a month the noble old man was dead.

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig was born in 1783, at the parsonage of Udby, in the south of Zealand. All his relatives were Zealand folk; both on the father's and mother's side the family had been Danes of the most Danish intensity for long generations. Perhaps this has had something to do with his great love of all that is national and homely; of all the Northern writers, not one has so exclusively been a man of the people. When he was only nine years old he was sent away to school in Jutland, and while he was here the news came of the execution of Louis XVI. The poet was wont to declare that he could remember it; doubtless the great events in France were the subject of much excited talk in the tutor's house at Tyregodlund. When he was fifteen he was sent to the Latin school at Aarhus, but long before this his mind had begun to take in literary impressions. On the wild moors of Jutland, he had learned to steal out alone with old chronicles and war-songs under his arm, and devour strange romances. At Aarhus he made friends with a little old shoemaker, and, sitting by his fireside through the long winter nights, heard folk song after folk-

song, and story after story. In 1800 he became a student at the University of Copenhagen, and began to study Icelandic. About 1803 he came under the influence of his cousin, Henrik Steffens, then a very prominent man just returned from Germany full of Fichte and Schelling, and whose lectures on the poetic treatment of themes of popular history were a revelation to the young men of the day. The works of Steffens are almost forgotten nowadays, but in the earliest years of the century he was a power in the North of Europe, more by the almost magnetic attraction of his personal presence than by any great depth or value in his words.

In a pretty country-house, in the island of Langeland, where he was tutor, Grundtvig now began to throw himself heart and soul into literature. He studied Icelandic, that he might make himself master of the ancient sagas; German, that he might revel in Goethe and Tieck; and English, that he might stand face to face with Shakspeare. But what roused the young Titan more than all was the publication of Oehlenschläger's first volume of poems, which came to him in his solitude in Langeland, and fired him with a new ambition. Henceforth he was a poet, but his first two works, though published under the patronage of Rahbek, the Mæcenas of Danish letters, fell dead from the press. But he had many strings to his bow. In 1807 he published *On Religion and Liturgy*, in which he stepped forward as a spiritual reformer, urging the necessity of a broader spirit in religious matters. The daring tone of the book drew people's attention to its author. In 1808

he appeared before the public in yet another guise, as author of *The Mythology of the North*, a first attempt at a philosophico-poetical interpretation of the Scandinavian myths, and this was followed by a long epic poem of similar drift, *The Decline of Heroic Life in the North*. Literary work was carried by him to such an excess that in 1810 his nervous system gave way, and the young poet had to go home to his father's house to be nursed. Here he wrote *A Short Sketch of the World's Chronicle*, a fanatical and violent work, which roused a good deal of ill-feeling against him. In 1813 his father died, and he came to live in Copenhagen. There his literary ambitions blossomed out in the most fervid manner. The seven years of his stay in the city are filled with the record of ceaseless labour; he published in that period a great mass of poetical, theological, and philosophical works, edited and wrote a newspaper, and translated into the best Danish, Snorro Sturleson, Saxo-Grammaticus, and Beowulf. In 1821 he came with his newly-wedded wife to live at Præstø, a little country town in Zealand, of which he had been made pastor; but the provincial life proved unbearable, and in a few months he flitted back to the capital.

Hitherto his life had been one of constant and well-merited success, but now a hand was interposed to stop the onward course of victory. It must be confessed that his own unwisdom drew it on him. In the University of Copenhagen a Dr. Clausen was Professor of Theology; Grundtvig, who had long passed beyond the romantic theology of Steffens, considered Clausen too much addicted to rationalistic

ideas, and openly, even violently, charged him with heresy. The result was a law-suit for libel, and Clausen was successful. Grundtvig was heavily fined, and placed under ecclesiastical censure, a ban which was not removed for sixteen years. He retired from publicity in consequence, and lived as a private man of letters; the languages and popular literature of the peoples of the North continued to be his constant study. He interested himself in Anglo-Saxon, and, that he might explore all the streams of that language at their fountain-head, he paid four successive visits to England. In 1842, especially, when the Tractarian movement at Oxford was beginning to work so powerfully in the English Church, Grundtvig, who had watched the battle from afar, came over to us again, that he might study on the spot the various currents of excited religious opinion then dividing English society. All this while he was not entirely without public influence in theological matters; soon after his disgrace, he sought and at last obtained permission to preach in a single church in Copenhagen, where he, Sunday by Sunday, declaimed and exhorted in his peculiar manner to a select audience of disciples. At first his influence was very small, but his pupils, if few, were extremely enthusiastic, and his doctrines have so far spread as to have formed a sect who glory in the name of Grundtvigians, and who comprise within their numbers a large proportion of the inhabitants of Denmark and Norway, and not a few in Sweden. In his later years he has spent much labour in advocating a new scheme of education for the peasants, by means of what are called

Popular High Schools. These schools are carried on under Grundtvigian principles—that is, everything the old poet has counselled is carried out on an extravagant scale—for he remarked, it is said, that he never was a “Grundtvigian” himself, and never sanctioned half the follies that are perpetrated in his name. These High Schools are now found all over Denmark and Norway. The peasants meet together, men and women, in the winter nights, and are taught to read and write, if that is needful, but chiefly receive oral instruction in the elements of singing, and, above all, study the history of their country in Grundtvig’s rhythmical chronicles and songs. In Denmark the schools are extremely popular, and the spirit of hatred towards the “German tyrant” is strongly fostered in them, for every Grundtvigian is, above all things, intensely a Dane.

In religious matters Grundtvig never divided himself distinctly from the Danish Church ; to the last he remained within the pale of it. But at the very time that he was confuting the neologism of Professor Clausen he was developing views at variance with Danish orthodoxy. He opposed the usual view of the inspiration of the Bible with great subtlety, and with evident sincerity, though his views were neither entirely logical nor entirely original. He first made public his convictions at the very time when an extremely interesting work of an analogous character was appearing in England, the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, by S. T. Coleridge. But while Coleridge conscientiously refers to Lessing as the suggestor of his ideas, Grundtvig was under the impression that his own were



entirely new. The formula upon which all that is peculiar in his teaching rests, is that "the Church of Christ is founded on a word, and not on a book;" and so, without in any way rejecting the Bible, he considers it secondary to the Creed, and would fain trace this last to the actual oracular word of Jesus. If this theory be vague, it is at the same time quite undeniable that Grundtvig has brought about a great and salutary revival in the practical character of the Danish Church. He has introduced animated and popular preaching, hearty singing and frequent communions, with a new and excellent hymn-book for general use, in which he has superseded the tiresome and conventional pieces of the last century in favour of the stirring and national hymns of such ancient poets as Kingo and Brorson. At the same time, the most sober-minded theologians looked askance at Grundtvig's doctrinal laxities. He was an old Pagan at heart, after all, a viking—baptised, indeed, and zealous for the faith, but dim on all crucial questions of dogma. His youth had been wearied by much abstract talk about virtue, and it was the conquering power and wide-spreading enthusiasm, rather than the morality of the gospel, that charmed him. The picturesque and anthropomorphic features of religion delighted him to a dangerous excess, and he was not always very sure if it were Christ or Baldur for whom he fought. The great point was to be always fighting for some pure and personal deity. For the Old Testament he scarcely disguised his indifference. His ardour and his glowing passion made the common people hear him gladly, but grave theologians, such as Dr.

Martensen and Dr. Fog, eminent divines whose creed was crystallised in systems of Christian ethics and Christian dogmatics, always held aloof from the rash and emotional schismatic. Grundtvig's title of Bishop was only an honorary one; he never held a diocese.

As a poet, one of the greatest of Scandinavian critics has called Grundtvig "the younger brother of Oehlenschläger;" but he differed greatly from that eminent man, and indeed from all later Danish poets, in being no artist, but essentially a fighter, a man of action. He never cared to address the polite world of letters; he wrote poems for the people, and in return there is no poet in our time whose works have been read and loved in the homes of the peasants as his have been. "Like a bird in the greenwood, I would sing for the country folks, so that my song might pass from mouth to mouth, and give delight from one generation to another. It will be my greatest happiness, as a child-like poet, if I can write songs that will make bare legs skip in the street at the sound of them. That shall be called my best poem, my greatest glory and memorial, which is the greatest favourite in Danish harvest-fields when the girls are binding sheaves. That shall be my crowned and accepted poem which inclines most girls to the dances at every country wedding." This is, at least, a very intelligible ambition, and a very arduous one. It can hardly be said that Grundtvig has the perfect simplicity and repose that such an aim requires. He is, perhaps, of foreign writers, the one most near to Carlyle in temperament. On all sides of his genius he was a little too destructive; he

gloried throughout his long life in opposing himself to conventional forms and conventional aspirations; he even found an exhilaration in the mere act of fighting. He was a dangerous old literary bersark to the last. Slightly altering his own words, we may take them as describing his life's course :—

“ This hero followed not the tide ;  
He dashed the waves of thought aside,—  
Above his hair their wild spray passed,  
But only silvered it at last.”

It was in lyrical composition that he achieved the greatest triumphs; as a lyrist he will always rank high among the poets of the North, although he lacked the gifts of concentration and compression.

## II.

There can never have existed two poets more widely different in genius and disposition than Grundtvig and Bødtker, who for nearly eighty years lived as fellow-citizens of the same little state. They had less in common than Burns and Keats; the first was essentially a man of action, the second as essentially a dreamer and an artist. Ludvig Adolph Bødtker was born on April 22, 1793, being thus by eight months Shelley's junior. When he was a very little child the young Oehlenschläger came to act in private theatricals with his brothers, and thus in his father's house the boy became acquainted with the new romantic literature. Oehlenschläger became his first

master in verse, but he soon learned to express his very plastic and definite genius in his own way. In 1812 he went to the university, and lounged easily through an uneventful student-life in which love and verse outweighed the attractions of deep study. Early in life his innocent epicureanism asserted itself, and when in 1824 his father died, leaving him a small fortune, he did not hesitate an hour, but set off at once to live in Italy. He settled in Rome; his rooms looked on to the Piazza Barberini, and exactly opposite him was Thorwaldsen's studio. For eleven years he received at his window every morning the great sculptor's greeting from the shining street below, and he became in time the most intimate of all the friends of Thorwaldsen. In his own house he held a little court for Scandinavian poets and painters visiting Rome; and the enjoyable monotony of his life was only broken by little excursions into the mountains or to the Bay of Naples. His favourite spot outside Rome was Nemi, the scenery of which inspired several of his most exquisite verses.

The simplicity and idle ease of Rome delighted Böttcher; he was able to do exactly what he pleased, and in company with Thorwaldsen he associated with an extraordinary group of personages. To the studio came the King of Bavaria, the ex-King of Holland, Dom Miguel of Portugal, and Napoleon's old mother Letitia, while Böttcher counted among his own visitors not these only, but King Frederick VII. of Denmark, Sir Walter Scott, Cornelius and Horace Vernet. To study so motley a crew of notabilities was the young Danish poet's delight,

and he filled up the odd corners of his time by polishing to their last perfection one after another of his own adorable verses, composing with the utmost deliberation and at long intervals.

In 1835 Thorwaldsen died, and it then became apparent that Böttcher had deserved well of Denmark, for it was only by his constant and untiring effort that the versatile sculptor had been induced to leave his works to his own country. Böttcher had had to fight the battle step by step with the King of Bavaria, who had made up his mind to secure the sculptures for Munich, and who could not conceal his displeasure when the poet outwitted him at last by inducing Thorwaldsen to sign the deed of bequest. To accompany the precious freight to Copenhagen, Böttcher tore himself away from Italy. With all his late friend's masterpieces around him, he set out from Leghorn with a gay "*a rivederla!*" to the Italian coast, which he was not fated to revisit. For finding himself once again in Copenhagen, his easy indolent nature led him to put off the idea of returning southwards until his life had taken root again in the North. As, however, he made a little Denmark around him in Rome, so in Copenhagen he contrived to enjoy something still of Italy. With his guitar, his roses, his quaint friends, he lived his own life without constraint, profoundly careless, because unconscious, of the "fall of sceptres and of crowns." His philosophy was that of Anacreon, or rather of Omar Khayyam: he never vexed himself about his soul; he lived for enjoyment only, but then he enjoyed not

merely the sunshine, and flowers, and choice wines, but still more the conversation of his friends and the diapason of the noble poetry of all time. He was no critic, but his range of poetic pleasures was very wide; and if he had a fault, it was foolish indulgence to every needy man of letters who sought his help or his sympathy. To Bødtker went the poetess who was "misunderstood" at home, and the antiquarian whose researches a cold world derided. In him at least they always found an auditor. It did not occur to him to publish his own poems until 1856, when he was already an elderly man. They fill one slender volume, which has been augmented since his death by another still more slender.

Ludvig Bødtker is one of the most finished poets that the North has produced: the entire collection of his works is no larger than the poems of Thomas Gray, but almost every one of them is a gem, cut and engraved with the most exquisite precision. In metrical construction his lyrics have an extraordinary delicacy and shapeliness; he is the most consummate artist in form among the Danish poets. His most characteristic pieces unite a kind of dry sparkle of humour with the intense light and vivid form of antiquity or of Italian landscape. Among these the longest and finest is "The Meeting with Bacchus," a delicious "piece of Paganism," as Wordsworth would have called it. The poet leaves the dewy gardens of Frascati in the early morning, and on a stout mule climbs towards Monte Porcia. The rosy radiance of the morning strikes them as they pass the ancient Tusculum, and the smiling poet

finds that the mule is smiling too. In this joyous mood they wend on their way, and the poet falls into a dream, in which the lovely modern landscape becomes full of antique life. At last, at the side of an old rock-cistern, he shouts "Evoë!" and starts to hear a triple echo. Suddenly he perceives at his side the ancient altar of Bacchus, and before him rise a motley group of satyrs.

"And lo! in a quiet reverie beside me, a youth lay stretched upon the marble, with a dreamy smile as if his thoughts re-kindled the dark fires of antique art.

The sandal which bound his foot was delicately fastened; one arm supported his head, the other, with a glass in the hand, lay along the table naked, as though Phidias had carved it.

Mine eyes sank when that youth turned and gazed on me, for midnight owns no star so sparkling as his eyes were, and yet my looks were chained to their clear fires."<sup>1</sup>

The youth pours out a cup of wine, and when the poet praises it, says coldly, "Non c'é male!" "Not bad, indeed! show me a better," cries the guest. "Si, Signore!" replies the youth, and bids him follow. He leads him to a rustic dwelling in the rock, all overgrown with ivy, and leads him down into a cellar. He crushes marvellous red grapes into a beaker, and the poet lifts up his song of praise to Bacchus, while still the youth gravely smiles.

"He lowered the beaker; there came a cascade of fire, a murmur of vine-leaves, and then all the cavern was filled with a perfume of wine, mingled with roses and jasmine.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix Z.

I drank, while my eyes gazed intently beyond the glory and the vapour ; the first grew like a magian's lamp, the last became a dim veil of pearl, through which all seemed mistier but fairer than before.

It seemed to me that pillars rose from the floor, and shot out marble shoulders, over which a cupola sprang high into the roof, and that round the alabaster of the walls the ivy swung in festoons.

But such a mist hung round me ! then it cleared, and lo ! the wine-casks had disappeared, and seven yellow leopards, still and severe, lay watching me, with folded paws.

Then, reeling with the vision, I turned to the youth that brought me thither smiling. He rested, majestic, on a thyrsus, and his look was terrible. I fell before him in the dust, and stammered 'Dionysos !'<sup>1</sup>

He wakes to find that he has been dosing in the wood by the road-side, and that his mule stands patiently by him. I cannot hope in this bald sketch to give any idea of the form and beauty of a poem that approaches as near perfection as modern verses can. This is perhaps the finest of Bödtcher's lyrics, though there are several others that in precision and originality—in the qualities of a cameo or an intaglio, clear form carved in colour—come very near it.

I had the privilege of being presented to this charming old man and divine poet, during the last year of his life. He was living in Sværtegade, a little street in Copenhagen, where he occupied rooms high up the house, close under the sky. I was introduced by an esteemed friend of his,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix AA.



and the singularly genial and gentle manner of his welcome put me at my ease with him at once. His sitting-room was thoroughly in keeping with his character. It was filled with works of art and memorials of his life in Italy. Behind his arm-chair stood Bissen's bust of the poet when he was a young and handsome man. It could not be said of him at eighty-one that he was otherwise than pleasant-looking, although the loss of one eye was a marked disfigurement. He wore dark spectacles and a snuff-coloured wig; his figure was tall and spare, his forehead very full at the temples; and his mouth had evidently been large and sensitive, like Keats's. His one bright eye was still of an extraordinary brilliancy and vivacity. It was the first year, he explained to me, that he had not been able to get out into the beech-woods on "Pinsedag" or Whitsunday, a day on which Copenhagen is always deserted, and the forests are filled. It was on Whitsunday that we visited him, and the old gentleman was a little inclined to be mournful about it. But he cheered up as the sun came out and lighted into intense pale green the young leaves of a beech-tree, in a pot which filled the window, flanked by two rose-bushes. "Ah!" he said, "the sun through the leaves is as good as a flower to me, and when you are gone, I shall sit for the rest of the day and dream of the woods." He talked readily of his friendship with Thorwaldsen, and chuckled as he recounted the oft-told tale of how he outwitted the King of Bavaria. While he talked he sat on a *forhöining*, or raised platform, in the window; his restless eye seemed

all the while to follow something, and presently I discovered that opposite him an oblique mirror allowed him to watch the life passing in the street below. On the wall behind him hung his guitar; of his carpet he used to say that it was very costly, when you considered how many of the best cigars had to be consumed over it before it got so rich a colour, from the descending smoke; every object in the room had its particular anecdote or association connected with it; each could only have belonged to Bødtker, and the gentle epicurean seemed not the least precious or the least antique of the objects of art.

His smile was sweet and humorous—such a smile as Charles Lamb might have given a visitor in his happiest and quietest hours. It was on the 25th of May 1874 that I had the pleasure of his welcome; next day I received a little note and the poet's photograph. In July he sent me a kind greeting in a letter from Christian Winther, and on the 1st of October of the same year he died, after one day's illness. To the very last he clung to his old habits, singing his own songs in a feeble, broken voice, and playing meanwhile on the guitar. He left behind him the fragrant memory of a long life, in which there was no sadness or baseness, but in which art and an affectionate nature were self-sufficient to the close.

### III.

There was no man of genius in Europe so accessible as Hans Christian Andersen. Whether in his own house

in Havnegade, or in the country at Rolighed, where his friends the Melchiors had fitted up rooms for him, he was at the service of any visitor who brought with him the pass-word of enthusiasm and respect. He delighted in publicity, and responded to the sympathy of strangers with the utmost alacrity. I saw him in 1872, and again in 1874, and he did me the honour to write to me frequently between the earlier date and his death. Yet, although he accepted me at once into his intimacy, I cannot pretend that I have anything very characteristic to add to the published memorials of one of the most singular persons of our time. For Andersen throughout his long literary life never scrupled to make the world his confidante, and that with the utmost sincerity; so that his friends could but testify to the minute fidelity of his portrait of himself. It is true that that portrait is not to be found complete in those stories for children which are chiefly associated with his name in the mind of the English public. We have to read the *Romance of My Life*, and his chatty, egotistic books of travel, to realise his character, but in these it is drawn as firmly and coloured as richly as if Titian had survived to paint his features.

The passion for hoarding up little treasures of every kind—pebbles that friends had picked up, leaves that had been plucked on a certain day, odd mementoes of travel and incident—was always strongly developed in Andersen. He hated to destroy anything, and he dragged about with him, from one lodging to another, a constantly increasing store of what irritable friends were apt to consider rubbish.

In like manner, he could not endure to tear up paper with writing upon it, even if that writing were disagreeable or derogatory to his dignity. Hence, when his executors began to examine the piles of MS. that the poet had left behind him, they came upon such a mass of correspondence as few eminent persons can ever have bequeathed. Most people are glad to destroy any letter in which their own conduct is sharply criticised or in which reproof is administered to an obvious fault. But it was part of the crystal innocence of Andersen's character, than whom a simpler or a purer creature never breathed, to preserve with the utmost impartiality the good and the evil, the praise of his friends and their blame. Consequently, there is little need of personal memorials of Andersen. In his writings we can trace every change of temperament, every turn and whim of this guileless and transparent mind.

Few English people, perhaps, are aware how numerous and how versatile are the writings of Andersen. He attempted almost every form of authorship in the course of his long life. He was born on April 2, 1805, at Odense, in the Danish island of Funen. His father, a poor shoemaker, whose love of books and book-learning made him discontented with his trade, died in the poet's early childhood, and until his confirmation Andersen was left in the charge of his mother, an ignorant and superstitious but kindly person. Until Andersen's death the true raciness and originality of her mind were unknown; but her letters to her son, which then came to light, prove her

to have been, in shrewdness, wit, and sense, worthy to be the mother of a great man. Except during the few hours' wretched instruction at the Poor School, he was chiefly occupied with a little theatre of marionettes, on which he brought out various pieces, generally of his own composition. This early taste for theatrical pursuits was nourished in the child by a visit paid to Odense by some of the company of the Royal Theatre of Copenhagen. The actors gave special performances, and on these occasions Andersen managed to get on the boards and mix with the supers. After this, of course, the Copenhagen stage was the great aim of his life.

After his confirmation in the autumn of 1819, he travelled up to the capital to try his fortune, and entered the dancing and singing school at the theatre; but it soon became plain that he had no histrionic talent, and when his voice broke he was obliged to leave. However, he had managed to awaken interest in several very distinguished men—in Collin, Rahbek, the Oersteds, Baggesen, Weyse, and Siboni—and by their efforts he obtained a free entrance into the Latin school at Slagelse; when the rector of the school, the learned Meisling, was transferred to the college at Helsingör, he took Andersen with him. Meisling, however, though learned, was unsympathetic, and without understanding at all what was great and lovely in Andersen's character, made his eccentricities the object of untiring ridicule. The young man who had already written *The Dying Child*, and appeared as a poet, in 1827, in such influential journals as the *Kjöbenhavnspost* and

Heiberg's *Flyvende Post*, could at last bear this no longer, and came back to Copenhagen, where L. C. Möller introduced him into the University in 1828. The year after he published his first important work, *A Journey on Foot from Holmen's Canal to the East Point of Amager*, and the same year had produced, on the boards of the Royal Theatre, *Love on St. Nicholas' Tower*, a comic vaudeville in rhymed verse, which parodied the romantic dramas of the day; during the ensuing Christmas season appeared his first collection of poems, of which several already had attained considerable notoriety in the *Flyvende Post*.

In 1830 Andersen made the first of many travels, a tour in Funen and Jutland, and in 1831 published a volume of *Fancies and Sketches*, which was not so well received as his earlier works, and was especially cut up by Hertz in his powerful *Gjenganger-Breve*. This want of success, a blighted love experience, and other misfortunes threw Andersen into a painful condition of despondency, and he was ordered to travel for his health. He went to Germany, and published on his return *Shadow-Pictures of a Tour in the Hartz and Saxon Switzerland*. In 1832 appeared his *Vignettes of Danish Poets*, and a new volume of poems entitled *The Twelve Months of the Year*. He was lucky enough to receive a draft of money for travelling from the Government in the spring of 1833, and proceeded to Paris, where he met the enfeebled and almost blind P. A. Heiberg. Later in the year he was in Rome, where he fell in with Thorwaldsen and Bödtker, and with his

own great opponent, Hertz. In the summer of 1834 Andersen returned to Copenhagen, where in the meantime his beautiful dramatic poem, *Agnete and the Merman*, which he had sent home from Switzerland, had appeared. After his return was published in 1835 his exquisite romance, *The Improvisatore*, which he had commenced in Rome, and in which he sketches the life of the country folk in Italy, as in his next romance, *O. T.*, which came out the year after, he sketches the same in Denmark.

But in the meantime, by the publication of his first volume of *Eventyr*, or *Fairy Tales*, in 1835, Andersen had laid the foundation of his immense reputation, and the successive series of these stories, unapproached in modern literature for depth, pathos, and humour, continued to appear Christmas by Christmas, the most welcome gift to young and old. In 1852 they ceased to be entitled *Eventyr* and were called *Historier*. To the same class belongs the inimitable *Picture-Book without Pictures*, 1840. To his novels Andersen added in 1848 *The Two Baronesses*. In 1837 came *Only a Player*. Another novel was *To be or Not to be*. In 1853 Andersen published his own autobiography, under the title of *My Life's Romance*. As a dramatic author he has also shown no small genius, though this is not the most brilliant side of his life's work. The romantic dramas of *The Mulatto*, 1840, and *The King is Dreaming*, 1844; the romantic operas of *Little Christie*, 1846; *The Wedding by Lake Como*, 1848; with certain small comedies, especially *The New Lying-In Room* ("Den ny Barselstue"; *Barselstuen* being a very popular piece by Holberg), 1845,

attained very marked success at the Royal Theatre, which was also the case with the fairy comedies, *More than Pearls and Gold*, *Ole Luköie*, and *Hyldemoer*, which were brought out in 1849, 1850, and 1851 respectively at the Casino Theatre at Copenhagen. Andersen was incessantly moving hither and thither over the Continent of Europe, and on one occasion he crossed the Mediterranean Sea. The results of his observations were given to the public in a variety of chatty and picturesque volumes, of which the most characteristic were *A Poet's Bazaar*, 1841; *In Sweden*, 1849; and *In Spain*, 1863.

Andersen's nature craved the excitement of travel, and wherever he went he made himself acquainted with the prominent literary people of the place. There is no doubt that this personal habit helped his genius to make itself heard outside the borders of Denmark sooner than it would otherwise have done, but this has also been greatly exaggerated in Denmark, where some unworthy but not inexplicable jealousy was felt of the ubiquitous poet who carried his fame over Europe with him. It is well known that Andersen was a visitor of Dickens's at Gadshill; two years earlier he had been Wagner's guest in Berlin, and almost every literary or artistic man of eminence in Europe received a visit from him at one time or another. In 1861 he was at Rome just in time to see Mrs. Browning before her death, and to receive from her the last stanzas she ever wrote:—

“ ‘And oh ! for a seer to discern the same !’  
Sighed the South to the North.



' For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,  
To call the tree or the flower by its name !'  
Sighed the South to the North.

The North sent therefore a man of men  
As a grace to the South,  
And thus to Rome came Andersen.  
' Alas, but you must take him again !'  
Said the South to the North"—

verses which the old poet was never tired of repeating in his broken English.

Among all his multitudinous writings, it is of course his so-called Fairy Tales, his *Eventyr*, that show most distinctly his extraordinary genius. No modern poet's work has been so widely disseminated throughout the world as these stories of Andersen's. They affect the Hindoo no less directly than the Teutonic mind; they are equally familiar to children all over the civilised world. It is the simple earnestness, humour, and tenderness that pervades them, their perfect yet not over-subtle dramatic insight, their democratic sympathy with all things in adverse and humble circumstances, and their exquisite freshness of invention that characterise them most, and set them on so lofty a height above the best of other modern stories for children. The style in which they are composed is one never before used in writing; it is the lax, irregular, direct language of children that Andersen employs, and it is instructive to notice how admirably he has gone over his earlier writings and weeded out every phrase that savours of pedantry or contains a word that a child cannot learn to

understand. When he first wrote these stories he was under the influence of the German writer Musæus, and from 1830 to about 1835 he was engaged in gradually freeing himself from this exotic manner, and in bringing down his style to that perfection of simplicity which is its great adornment.

In character, Andersen was one of the most blameless of human creatures. A certain irritability of manner that almost amounted to petulance in his earlier days, and which doubtless arose from the sufferings of his childhood, became mellowed, as years went on, into something like the sensitive and pathetic sweetness of a dumb animal. There was an appeal in his physical appearance that claimed for him immunity from the rough ways of the world, a childlike trustfulness, a tremulous and confiding affectionateness, that threw itself directly upon the sympathy of those around. His personality was somewhat ungainly: a tall body with arms of very unusual length, and features that recalled, at the first instant, the usual blunt type of the blue-eyed, yellow-haired Danish peasant. But it was impossible to hold this impression after a moment's observation. The eyes, somewhat deeply set under arching eyebrows, were full of mysterious and changing expression, and a kind of exaltation which never left the face entirely, though fading at times into reverie, gave a singular charm to a countenance that had no pretension to outward beauty. The innocence and delicacy, like the pure frank look of a girl-child, that beamed from Andersen's face, gave it an unique character hardly to be expressed in words; notwith-

standing his native shrewdness, he seemed to have gone through the world not only undefiled by, but actually ignorant of its shadow-side.

The one least pleasing feature of his character was his singular self-absorption. It was impossible to be many minutes in his company without his referring in the naïvest way to his own greatness. The Queen of Timbuctoo had sent him this; the Pacha of Many Tails had given him such an Order; such a little boy in the street had said, "There goes the great Hans Andersen!" These reminiscences were incessant, and it was all the same to him whether a little boy or a great queen noticed him, so long as he was favourably noticed. If, however, the notice was unfavourable, he was inconsolable for the time being, and again in this case it mattered nothing from what source the censure came. The Norwegian poet Welhaven used to relate that he was once in a Copenhagen coffee-house with Andersen, when the latter, glancing at one of the lowest and most ribald prints of the hour, became suddenly excessively agitated. With trembling hands he pointed out to Welhaven a passage in which some miserable penny-a-liner had pointed a coarse jest with an allusion to Andersen's appearance. "Is it possible," Welhaven asked, "that you, with a European reputation, care what such a man says of you in such a place?" "Yes," replied Andersen, with tears in his eyes, "I do—a little!" This intense craving for perpetual laudation, no matter from whom, was an idiosyncrasy in Andersen's character not to be confounded with mere vulgar vanity.

It sometimes assumed really magnificent proportions, as when he once said to a friend of mine, an old friend of his own, in depreciation of some fulsome praise from abroad, "It is true that I am the greatest man of letters now living, yet the praise should not be to me, but to God who has made me so." It was a strange and morbid characteristic, to be traced, no doubt, to the distressing hardships of his boyhood. It was harmless and guileless, but it was none the less fatiguing, and it was so strongly developed that no biographical sketch of him can be considered fair that does not allude to it. During his lifetime, it would have been inhuman to vex his pure spirit by dwelling on a weakness that was entirely beyond his own control; but it is only just to his own countrymen, who have been so harshly blamed for their want of sympathy with him, to mention the fact which made Andersen's constant companionship a thing almost intolerable. In a small community like that of Copenhagen, a little personal peculiarity of this kind is not so easily overlooked as in a wider circle.

He passed peacefully away at eleven o'clock on the morning of August 4, 1875. He died just outside the northern suburb of Copenhagen, at Rolighed, in the arms of a family who had devoted themselves for years to the care of their eminent guest; here he fell asleep, in the truest sense, for out of a mild and peaceful slumber of many hours' duration, he never awakened. He had been suffering acutely and hopelessly from a complaint that now proved to have been cancer, and for some years past his

life had been one of ceaseless suffering, patiently and even heroically borne. Four months before the end he had completed his seventieth year, and in the festivities of that day he had been able in great measure to join. He could never rally from the relapse brought on by the excitement of this birthday, which was celebrated by the whole nation, from the royal family downwards, as a public holiday. He had the joy of receiving the greatest honour a poet can take from his country, the erection of a statue which will remind all coming generations of his outward form and feature, and having lived to receive this glory, not from one man or one clique of men, but from all Denmark, it was permitted him to rest from his suffering. He could not have died at a moment when his fame, spread from one end of the world to the other, was more living than it is now, and in dying he took from among us the most popular of all contemporary writers of the imagination. It is said that the very last literary subject in which he took interest was the history and work of his own great predecessor, the Hindoo fabulist, Bidpai, and the best books on that writer lay strewed upon his death-bed.

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## IV.

So many poets came up to the University of Copenhagen in 1828, that some wit dubbed them the four greater and the twelve minor prophets. This classification caused a great deal of amusement at the time, and is still remembered because Hans Christian Andersen happened to be one of the major prophets, and Paludan-Müller to be

one of the minor. The minor prophet, indeed, lived to see himself easily first among the children of Parnassus in Denmark.

Frederik Paludan-Müller was the third son of a remarkable man, Jens Paludan-Müller, who died as Bishop of Aarhus, and who became famous after his death as a theological writer of much vigour. Each of his sons became distinguished in one way or another. Frederik, the poet, was born at Kjerteminde, a little town in Funen, on February 7, 1809. He went to school at Odense in 1820, a few months after Andersen—poor little forlorn adventurer that he was—left that city for the capital. In 1832 he wrote four romances, in the hope of gaining a prize offered by the Society of Fine Arts. He was unsuccessful, but the romances, which were published, attracted attention. The same year he brought out a romantic drama, *Love at Court*, which had a considerable run, and still holds the stage. But when, in 1833, he printed his delicious poem of *The Dancing Girl*, with all its profusion of wit, pathos, and melody, his position as a poet was made. In 1834 he opened a new poetic vein, since admirably worked by Swinburne amongst ourselves, and by Paul Heyse in Germany, with his lyrical drama of *Amor and Psyche*, a work displaying stilistic gift of the first order, which produced much such a sensation in Copenhagen as, thirty years later, attended *Atalanta in Calydon* with us. At this point he began to go a little wrong; his next production, a story in rhyme, called *Zuleima's Flight*, being tinged with Byronisms and other inscrutable insipidity. The two

volumes of *Poems*, however, in 1836 and 1838, redeemed his reputation. All this time the poet had been quietly working away at his literary and juridical studies, and had attained his thirtieth year with no more exciting experience than could be contained in a walking-tour through the north of Zealand. He set out, however, in 1838, for a two years' wandering over Europe; he only once left Denmark again. The life of such a hermit is but a catalogue of his works. In 1841 he published his lyrical drama of *Venus*, and the first part of *Adam Homo*, an epic which it is customary to mention as his masterpiece. In 1844 appeared the noble drama of *Tithonus* and the delicate idyl of *The Dryad's Wedding*. His later productions were the conclusion of *Adam Homo*, 1848; *Abel's Death*, 1854; *Kalanus*, 1857; *Paradise*, 1861; *Spirits of Darkness in the Night*, 1862; *Ivar Lykke's Story*, a prose novel; *The Times are Changing*, a comedy, 1874; and *Adonis*, 1874. In the face of such a barren list of titles, the curse of Babel does indeed become a burden. It is useless to recommend the reader to the books themselves, and how is a weary critic to persuade him of the value of their contents? This, however, I shall presently attempt to do.

In 1872 Paludan-Müller was living in one of a little group of houses in the Royal Park of Fredensborg, on the left-hand side in driving up to the palace. It would be difficult to secure a more poetic situation. The great undulating park extended on all sides, with its classic solitude, its rich hoard of memories from the last century, and its delicious greensward swept by the long boughs of

the beeches. From the back of the poet's house, the park sloped away to the Esrom Lake, the most beautiful of all the beech-surrounded meres of North Zealand. There, in the most exquisite silence, broken only by the sound of a deer that came down to drink, the poet could watch from dawn to gloom

•

“ The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom.”

The court was never at Fredensborg, except for a little time in the summer, and the idyllic quiet of the park was unbroken. The old palace was always there to remind the wanderer, with its clean white walls and green cupola, of the beperiwigged gentlemen and bepatched ladies that had flirted down its smooth arcades. The place fostered the morbid melancholy of Paludan-Müller, and yet it possessed that note of refinement and personal elegance which he would have missed in a retreat more purely sylvan. When I saw him first he had not received a stranger for years ; he asked pardon for his manifest agitation, as some veritable Robinson Crusoe might do in suddenly reviewing a European face. But he was then at the very point of recovering from his strange, melancholy illness, and so far woke up to new life that he proposed to me a series of early morning walks, and at last conceived it possible that he might journey to London. This he never contrived to do, but he returned to Copenhagen and to society, and when I saw him again in 1874 he was looking ten years younger. He had a singularly fine and spiritual face, the eyes large and clear,



the hair silvery when I knew him, but deep yellow in earlier life. In speaking he expressed himself with emphasis, and in some cases a little too dogmatically for modern habits of thought, and he had but slight personal sympathy for his contemporaries. I was full of enthusiasm for the Norwegian poet, Ibsen, and spoke of him on one occasion to Paludan-Müller, but he confined himself to a rather cynical condemnation of the close of *Brand*. It was evident that he found no place in art for anything but the ideal beauty of which he was himself so exquisite an exponent. His adoration for the memory of his father was a very marked point in his character; in a review of one of his books I had especially indulged this pious foible in order to please him, and he recollected it two years afterwards with vehement commendation. The news of his death was a great surprise to his friends, for he had regained an unwonted vigour in 1874 and 1875. But the winter of 1876, that was fatal to Christian Winther, was fatal also to him, and within three days; for while the latter died on December 30, Paludan-Müller died on December 27, 1876.

There can be little doubt that posterity will judge *Adam Homo* to be its author's greatest claim to a place among poets of the first class. This epic, in *ottava rima*, is the history of a single man, a Dane in the Denmark of the poet's day, from his cradle to his grave. The hero is a Philistine of the Philistines, but his character is worked out with an irony so subtle that we begin by sympathising with the man that we end in ridiculing and despising.

The poem is full of great and original qualities ; humour and satire give place in rapid interchange to descriptive and pathetic passages of the most delicate beauty. Dr. Brandes, in his brilliant volume on the modern Danish poets (*Danske Digtere*, 1877), a work no Scandinavian student should be without, has very justly said of *Adam Homo* that it is "a piece of Denmark, a piece of our history, a piece of living cloth cut out of the web of time." But to the foreign reader it certainly lacks the cosmopolitan interest of the writer's lyrical dramas. Of these the greatest is, without doubt, *Kalanus*, and I cannot give a better idea of the genius of Paludan-Müller than by an analysis of this noble poem.

The scene is laid far back in heroic times, when the great presence of Alexander overshadowed the ancient world, and the story of his patience, and his labour, and his glory was in the mouth of all men living. Kalanus, an Indian, born by the Ganges, and brought up in a temple of Brama, has been living in the hills near the sources of the Indus as a solitary mystic, worshipping the Invisible Unity whom men call Brama. Day after day, kneeling by the river-side among the palms, he has prayed and longed for a manifestation of the incarnate Godhead. Born about the same time as the son of Philip of Macedon, his life has been spent in the silence of unbroken devotion, tended by his old mother and a faithful slave. Meanwhile, Alexander has driven like a tempest through the world, achieving the ultimate possible aim of an active sensuous nature. To Kalanus in his mystical existence of almost

supernatural calm comes the glorious Alexander, sailing up the Indus with his fleet; the mystic had been praying most importunately for the divine vision—

“ There by the prow I saw *him* stand,  
With helmless hair, and like the morning sun !  
His lotus-eyes flashed beams of radiance round !  
For ever all my heart and soul are his ! ”

In absolute faith that this is Brama, he forces himself into Alexander's presence. The conqueror, pleased with his enthusiasm, invites him to join his train, and forthwith Kalanus, his old mother, and all their small possessions, are moving with the Greek army in its westward retreat. The first important halt is at Pasargadæ, in Persia, and here the play opens and continues to the end.

The first act begins with a fine symphony that strikes the key-note of the whole play at once. Kalanus and his mother are saluting the rising sun with their song of morning prayer, that their pure souls may rise with his into the ethereal kingdom of the Truth, losing body and sense in the perfection of the soul. This is the day on which Kalanus is to have audience of Alexander, and he counts the hours till the splendid moment shall arrive. Sankara, his mother, who knows nothing of his conviction, is troubled by his sudden passion for the Great King, and asks its cause. “ Why,” she asks, “ is the clear flame of thy devotion, which no wind could move, now become a quivering tongue of unsteady fire ? Has the sight of one man so changed thee ? ” Then he unfolds to her his new-

born faith, that this hero, that man called Alexander, is no other than the universal Brahṃa made flesh to visit humanity. To his dazzled and inexperienced imagination all things seem to point to this one goal, and his intensity easily wins Sankara to his view. Most subtly is the growth of this new faith, born of desire and introspection, and fed by distance from its object, sketched by the poet in Kalanus's confession to his mother ; we are won into love and respect for the mild mystic at once, and the dreamier his speculations are, the more musical is his expression of them. Passing over some side-scenes of great interest we move on to the meeting of Kalanus and Alexander. The Indian approaches the palace as if it were a sanctuary, but his soul has no fear of the divinity ; all his nature is absorbed in that pure love that casts out fear ; he will at last wind his frail humanity round the omnipotent deity, as the ivy curls round the straight stem of the cocos-palm. Alexander meets him with the light patronage of an emperor at his ease, rallying Kalanus good-naturedly on his reticence and gloom, but saying nothing so obviously mortal as to shake the Indian in his confidence. Presently the conversation turns on those questions of divine ethics which are nearest to the heart of Kalanus. The reticence of the mystic melts in the fiery heat of his own ecstasy, and pours itself along the channels of Alexander's activities and aims, so strange to him. His soul overflows with the sudden accession of new thoughts and new desires, and the king, becoming deeply interested in his impassioned admirer, adopts a seriousness unusual to him, and exerts his great

and masculine intelligence in presenting new ideas of energetic action to the passive Indian. The soul of Kalanus, in his own esteem, now first wakes into full bloom of thought; this one interview with the divine though concealed Brama has effected it,—

“ As in my country, after one night's rain,  
The desert blossoms with a million flowers; ”

—and he throws himself into the dust in adoration.

The beginning of the next act is occupied with the humours of two Greek philosophers—Mopsos, a sensual atheist and scoffer; Pyrrhon, a troubled doubter—who argue, and after a while combine to cross-question Kalanus and to trouble his pure soul, unused to such a spirit of false philosophy. To Mopsos the enthusiasm of Kalanus for the king is merely the cringing of a toady; to Pyrrhon, it is a mystery of genuine belief almost incredible in its novelty. Alexander and Hephæstion join the three, and Kalanus once more basks in the sunlight of Brama's supposed presence. All minor vexations are lost in the joys of adoration. The progress of this long scene is in the highest degree masterly; the five characters are drawn with a firm and vigorous hand, and the interest, though of a purely intellectual character, is sustained and heightened to the end. Kalanus, whose utterances during his season of complete conviction were conspicuous for harmony, becomes more and more fragmentary and discordant as Alexander, in the easy neighbourhood of friends, slips into a frivolous vein of badinage that is most unlike the spirit

of Brama. As the wine heats his brain, Alexander becomes still more jocose, and orders Kalanus to dispute with Mopsos on philosophical questions; the Indian, struggling against his own dejection, obeys. The selfish scepticism of Mopsos is reproved by the sublime mysticism of his opponent, who proclaims that the ultimate desire of the soul is to be absorbed into the Eternal,—

“Returning like a drop of dew, and lost  
In that great fountain-ocean whence it came.”

As this great idea, new to all the scoffing Greeks, is being discussed and ridiculed, the doors burst open, and the whole changes into one of those splendid scenes of glowing, sensuous colour, in painting which Paludan-Müller shows a singular delight. A chorus of girls, led by two of the most distinguished hetairai of the time, all garlanded, and singing to the music of stringed instruments, rush into the palace. No one heeds Kalanus, who has risen behind Alexander, and stands there rigid and pale with passion. There follows some exquisite choral writing, and at last Thais, pouring out her soul into a lyric that is like a “god’s voice hidden in a bird,” throws her lute aside and flings herself into the arms of Alexander. But before she can reach her royal lover, Kalanus is between them, with a knife, ready to sacrifice the impious nymph. The king angrily brushes him aside, Thais rushes to embrace Alexander, and the whole company, singing and shouting, leave the palace to seek fresh revels elsewhere. Kalanus is left alone, a dying priest in a polluted

shrine ; the god he has been worshipping proved to be a mere man, the slave of wine and women, tossed about by vulgar and ungodlike passions. He departs in unutterable sorrow.

In the third act, Alexander, repenting of his folly under the exhaustion of the morning after the revel, is troubled at the absence of Kalanus, and learning that a pyre is being built on which it is reported that the Indian is about to destroy himself, he supposes that the cause of Kalanus's despair is his own harshness, and starts in person to reassure him of favour. In a later act Sankara and her son are discovered in their hut, and Kalanus is sleeping. He wakes calm and quiet, but when Sankara attempts to dissuade him from self-immolation, his purpose is shown to be firm and absolute, and again she gives way before his more powerful will. But in his sleep he has had a glorious vision of Brama, and his fancy is no longer haunted by the desire of an anthropomorphic revelation of the God-head, but is securely content to pass into the splendour of a Presence whose form and fashion he knows not, but in whom he trusts with an infinite repose. This vision of glory, and a clearer intellectual perception of the mystery of divine things, lift him above all mundane hopes and fears. His mother leaves him to prepare the bath of purification, and Alexander enters, addressing Kalanus with gracious courtesy. To the conqueror's intense surprise, he finds, instead of a suppliant, broken-hearted at his feet, a calm and resolute opponent. Alexander assures him of his friendship ; takes for granted that this report of a funeral

pyre is untrue ; commands, entreats, at last kneels to him for a promise to save his own life ; storms at him with sudden passion ; entreats again, but to no avail. Kalanus stands outside the magic ring, and in the power of his purity is stronger of will than the world's master. This is one of the most powerful scenes in the poem. Tired out with his efforts, Alexander leaves him at last, swearing to prevent his purpose with physical force. But here also the mystic's will is stronger than the king's, and in the last act Alexander sanctions the burning of Kalanus. The philosopher approaches his own fiery tomb with a solemn elation, a sublime joy. Dismissing the troops, casting aside the adornments that Alexander has sent to do him honour, he gathers his own countrymen about him, mounts the pyre, and in the midst of a choral invocation to the spirit of Brama, expires, his soul rising to the skies like wine poured out into the fire. The chorus around proclaim his absorption into the Universal Oneness that is spirit and light.

The work which seems to me to approach most nearly to the classic severity and grace of "Kalanus" is the last thing that Paludan-Müller published, his greeting to approaching Death, of whom he had ever been a lover. This is *Adonis*, a short poem of less than fifty stanzas, in the manner of the early mythological studies in which the poet developed his poetic individuality in its purest and most ideal form. It belongs to the same class of his writings as *Tithon* and *Amor and Psyche*, though it is much slighter and more direct than these. Charon is



represented as just setting his sail to catch the weak wind that blows along the Styx, when he hears a voice cry to him from the landing-place, and before he has time to turn, a beautiful youth has leaped into his boat. The thin ghosts shudder together at the unwelcome coming of one so full of life. Charon inquires his name, and learns that it is Adonis, who, snatched away from men by Aphrodite, has found that good fortune at last a burden, whose heart has remained unsatisfied among all the Paphian roses, and who now has escaped from her, and goes to lay his devotion and his desire at the feet of Persephone, flying from pleasure that he may find rest. "For I must always love, and always love a goddess; that was my destiny, and I have followed it all my life. Venus and Proserpine were near when I was born, and before I began to breathe two goddesses were contesting to possess me." Aphrodite has held his manhood first; now, weary of a love so exciting and so exhausting, he turns with irrepressible longing to the goddess, crowned with calm leaves, in whose hushed dominions there are no budding and no falling flowers. The boat of Charon passes in silence down the dark channel, roofed in with rocks, the pulse of the oars alone breaking the deep stillness. Arrived at the harbour of death, a shade summons the coming shades to the banquet of Pluto. Adonis sees them disappear, as he stands alone upon the desolate margin of the stream. Presently a dead-pale maiden comes, bearing a torch, and cries, "Charon, is he come?" This girl Persephone sends daily to inquire if Adonis has arrived. At last, after so

many years, the answer is "Yes!" She binds his eyes, and leads him through the realms of death, down into the hall of the infernal gods, where, when his eyes are unbound, he sees Persephone sitting on her throne in silence and solitude. A tinge of red flies to her white cheeks, she opens her majestic arms, and breathes his name; with an outburst of passionate love he throws himself at her feet, and tells her how, even in the arms of Aphrodite, he has loved her, and now has flown to her to experience with her keener and deeper pleasures than the earthly goddess could give him. But Persephone repels his caresses, and warns him that she has no love to give him that can be likened with the love of passion; if he seeks for that he is deceived, yet she also loves him, and she has better gifts for whom she loves. While the beautiful Adonis still clasps her knees with his hands, she bids a maiden fill a beaker with the waters of Lethe. He drinks the divine nepenthe, and has only just time to respond to the kiss the goddess presses on his mouth, before he sinks at her feet in slumber, and lays his weary head upon her knee. So, through the ages these two remain unmoving—Adonis in a happy dream, forgetful of all past passions and desires, Persephone bending over him with a grave smile, pleased at her final victory over her earthly rival. The open heavens are above them; and time is only marked by the waxing and the waning of the moon.



## APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX.

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### *TEXT OF THE POEMS TRANSLATED.*

#### A.

Atter hæved  
Sig min Sjel. jeg Svalen saae,  
Sænkende sig under over  
Skyens melkehvide Vover,  
Og jeg frydedes paany.  
Hvor den svæved!  
Hvor den svinged i det Blaa, --  
Solforgylt, skjönt i sit Gry  
Solen bagom Aasen laae!  
Hvor den svinged! hvor den svæved,  
Somom den optrak i Luften  
Med sin blanke  
Vingespids et straaalet ,  
Gylden-og blaastribet Net!  
Jeg den fulgte med min Tanke,  
Hvor dens Flugt mon videst vanke,  
Hvor de Balsamdryp, den bar,  
Foran tindred  
Som et Tvillingstjernepar.

## B.

Hvor i blaanende Geled  
 Alper frem af Dalen stige,—  
 Hvor ved den krystalne Bræ  
 Blomstrer snehvidt Abildtræ,  
 Medens i en Snefonns Spor  
 Vilde Rose lystigt groer,—  
 Hvor en Kilde først sin Sang  
 Kun mundharpespæd begynder  
 Murmlende blandt Mos og Stene;  
 Men saa under Orregrene  
 Fra sin Afdal ud sig skynder,  
 Dreven af ungdomlig Trang  
 Til med Hoveddalens Ynder  
 I sin Glands sig at forene;  
 Og, liig David Harpeslager,  
 Fra en Hyrde bleven til  
 Dalens Konning ved sit Spil  
 Stolt og mægtig gjennemdrager  
 Alt sit skjønne Rige, Dalen.

WERGELAND: *Den engelske Lods*, xi. 55-73.

C.—*TIL MIN GYLDENLAK.*

Gyldenlak, för Du din Glands har tabt  
 Da er jeg Det hvoraf Alt er skabt;  
 Ja, för Du mister din Krones Guld,  
 Da er jeg Muld.

Idet jeg raaber : med Vindvet op !  
 Mit sidste Blik faaer din Gyldentop.  
 Min Sjæl dig kysser, ideel forbi  
 Den flyver fri.

Togange jeg kysser din søde Mund ;  
 Dit er det første med Røttens Grund,  
 Det andet give du, Kjæle husk,  
 Min Rosenbusk !

Udsprungen faaer jeg den ei at see ;  
 Thi bring min Hilsen, naar det vil skæe ;  
 Og siig, jeg ønsker, at paa min Grav  
 Den blomstrer af.

Ja siig, jeg ønsker, at paa min Bryst.  
 Den Rose laa, du fra mig har kyst ;  
 Og, Gyldenlak, vær i Dødens Huus  
 Dens Brudeblus !

WERGELAND : *Fra Døds'ejet.*

#### D.—AFTENSTEMNING.

Nu synker Aftenen sagte ned  
 Med gylden Rødme paa Sø og Lier,  
 Og lydløs Taushed og yndig Fred  
 Til rolig Slummer Naturen vier.  
 De grønne Strande  
 Sig stille blande  
 I Søens Spil med de blanke Vande,  
 Der fange dem.



Se Fiskerbaaden hvor slank og let,  
 Höit paa den glimrende Flade baaren,  
 Hvor Karlen böier sig mod sit Net,  
 Men stille Pigerne holde Aaren.  
     Den tause Tale  
     Fra Sö og Dale  
 Al Dagens Higen har kunnet svale,  
     Og binde dem.

Men södt hensunken en Pige staar  
 Og fremad ser i den klare Himmel,  
 Mens længselsvakt hendes Tanke gaar  
 Til Julelegen og Dandsens Vrimmel.  
     Den röde Lue  
     Paa Aftenens Bue  
 Har kastet Funkler vi ej kan skue—  
     Hun stirrer ud.

Du rige, rödmende Sommernat,  
 De eier Meer end de lyse Dage,  
 O, bring den Fagre din bedste Skat,  
 Lad Drömmen kjærlig til hende drage :  
     Naar snart de lande  
     Ved grønne Strande,  
 Læg Sölverkronen om hendes Pande  
     Som salig Brud !

MOE: *Blandede lyriske Digte.*

## E.

I Skogen Smaagutten gik Dagen lang ;  
Der havde han hørt slig en underlig Sang.

Gutten en Fløjte af Selju skar,—  
Og prøved, om Tonen derinde var.

Tonen den hvisked' og nævnte sig ;  
Men bedst som han lytted', den løb sin Vej.

Tit, naar han sov, den til han smög,  
Og over hans Pande med Elskov strög.

Vilde den fange og vaagned' brat ;  
Men Tonen hang fast i den blege Nat.

Herre, min Gud, tag mig derind ;  
Thi Tonen har faaet mit hele Sind,

Herren han svared' : " Den er din Ven,  
Skjönt aldrig en Time du ejer den.

" Alle de andre dog lidt forslaar  
Mod denne, du søger, men aldrig naar !"

BJÖRNSON : *Arne*, xiv.

## F.

Solglad Dag i hegnet Have  
Skabtes dig till Lyst og Leg ;  
Tæn̄k ej paa, at Höstens Gave  
Tidtnok Vaarens Löfter sveg.  
• Æbleblomsten, hvid og vakker,  
Breder over dig sit Tjeld,—

Lad den saa langs alle Bakker  
 Drysses vejrslaat næste Kveld !

Hvad vil du om Frugten spørge  
 Midt i Træets Blomstertid ?  
 Hvorfor sukke, hvorfor sørge,  
 Slövet under Slæb og Slid ?  
 Hvorfor lade Fugleskræmmen  
 Klappre Dag og Natt paa Stang !  
 Glade Broder, Fuglestemmen  
 Ejer dog en bedre Klang !

Hvorfor vil du Spurven jage  
 Fra din rige Blomstergren !  
 Lad den för som Sanglön tage  
 Din Forhaabning en for en.  
 Tro mig, du ved Byttet vinder,  
 Tusker Sang mod sildig Frugt :  
 Husk Moralen "Tiden rinder" ;  
 Snart din Friluftslund er lukkt.

Jeg vil leve, jeg vil synge,  
 Til den dör, den sidste Hækk ;  
 Fej da tröstig alt i Dynge,  
 Kast saa hele Stadsen væk.  
 Grinden op ; lad Faar og Kviger  
 Gramse graadigt, hver som bedst ;  
 Jeg bröd Blomsten ; lidt det siger,  
 Hvem der tar den döde Rest ! •

IBSEN : *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

G.

STYVER.

Ja, det var nu i  
Den Tid, jeg 'var forelsket.

FALK.

Er da den forbi?  
Jeg trode ej din Elskovsrus udsovet!

STYVER.

Nu er jeg jo officielt *forlovet*;  
Det er jo mere end *forelsket*, ved jed!

IBSEN: *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

H.

FALK.

Det gjør hver Glædens Rigmand till en Tigger!  
Hvis jeg som Sprogets Sultan maatte raade  
En Time kun, det Silkesnorén fik,  
Og skulde ud af Verden uden Naade.

STYVER.

Hvad har du da imod det Haabets Ord?

FALK.

At det formörker os Guds fagre Jord.  
"Vor næste Kjærlighed," "vor næste Viv,"  
"Vor næste Maaltid" og "vor næste Liv,"  
Se, den *Forsynlighed*, som heri ligger,  
Den er det, som gjør Glædens Sön till Tigger.

Saa langt du ser, forstygger den vor Tid,  
 Den dræber Nydelsen af Öjeblikket ;  
 Du har ej Rö för du faar Baaden vrikket  
 Imod "den næste" Strand med Slæb og Slid :  
 Men er du fremme—mon du *da* tör hvile ?  
 Nej, du maa atter mod et "Næste" ile.  
 Og saadan gaar det—fortvæk—udaf Livet,—  
 Gud ved, om bag et Stoppested er givet.

## FRÖKEN SKJÆRE.

Men fy, Herr Falk, hvor kan De tale saa !  
 Sligt maa min Kjæreste ej höre paa,  
 Han er excentrisk nok.—Aa hör, min Kjære ;  
 Kom hid et Öjeblik !

STYVER (*beskjæftiget med at rense sin Pibespids*).

Jeg kommer snart.

IBSEN : *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

## I.

Saa ubarmhjørtigt, som en strasburgsk Gaas,  
 Med rimet Sludder og med metrisk Vaas,  
 Saa alt hans Indre, Lever, Sjøel og Kraas,  
 Naar ud det krænges, findes ganske fuldt  
 Af lyrisk Ister og rethorisk Smult.

IBSEN : *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

## J.

Dækk mine Öjnes Spejl med Blindheds Skinmel,  
 Saa skal jeg digte om den lyse Himmel.

Skaff mig, om blot en Maanedstid paa Borg,  
En Kval, en knusende, en Kjæmpesorg,  
Saa skal jeg synge Livets Jubel ud.  
Og helst, min Fröken, skaff mig blot en Brud.

IBSEN: *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

K.

SVANHILD.

Da Troen truedes ifjor i Syrien,  
Gik De 'da did som Korsets svorne Mand?  
Nej, paa Papiret var De varm som Taler,—  
Og sendte "Kirketidenden" en Daler.

(FALK gaar op pover i Haven).

Falk, er De vred?

FALK.

Nej visst; jeg gaar og sturer,—  
Se, det er alt.

SVANHILD.

De er som to Naturer—  
To uforligte—

FALK.

Ja det ved jeg vel.

SVANHILD.

Men Grunden!

FALK.

Grunden? Jo, fordi jeg hader  
At gaa omkring med frækt udringet Sjæl,

Lig Godtfolks Kjærlighed i alle Gader,—  
 At gaa omkring med blottet Hjertevarme,  
 Som unge Kvinder gaar med nøgne Arme!  
 De var de eneste,—De, Svanhild, De,—  
 Saa tænkte jeg,—naa den Ting er forbi—  
*(Hun gaar over og seer ud).*

De lytter?

SVANHILD.

Till en anden Röst, som taler,  
 Hyss! Hörer De? Hver Kveld, naar Solen daler,  
 Da kommer flyvende en liden Fugl,—  
 Se *der*,—der kom den frem af Lövets Skjul,—  
 Ved De, hvad fuldt og fast jeg tror? Hver den,  
 Som her paa Jord blev nægtet Sangens Gave,  
 Hun fik af Gud en liden Fugl till Ven,  
 För en kun skabt og for den enes Have.

FALK

*(tager en Sten opp fra Jorden).*

Da gjælder det, at Fugl og Ejer mødes,  
 Skal ej dens Sang i fremmed Have ödes.

SVANHILD.

Ja, det er sandt! men jeg har fundet min.  
 Jeg fik, ej Ordets Magt, ej Sangerstemme;  
 Men kviddrer Fuglen i sit grønne Gjemme,  
 Det er som Digte daled i mit Sind—

(FALK *kaster Stenen*; SVANHILD *udstöder et Skrig.*)

O Gud, der slog De den! Hvad har De gjort!

O det var syndigt, syndigt!

FALK (*i lidenskabeligt Oj-prör*).

Nej—kun Öje

For Öje, Svanhild—ikkun Tand for Tand!

Nu faar De ingen Hilsen fra det Høje,

Og ingen Gave mer fra Sangens Land.

Se, det er Hævnen over Deres Værk!

SVANHILD.

Mit Værk?

FALK.

Ja Deres! Indtill denne Time

Slog i mit Bryst en Sangfugl kjækk og stærk.

Se—nu kan Klokken over begge kime,

De har den dræbt!

SVANHILD.

Har jeg!

FALK.

Ja, da De slog

Min unge, glade Sejerstro till Jorden

Da De *forloved* Dem!

IBSEN: *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

L.

Han fordum var paa Mod so rig;

Han stred med Verden om en elsket Kvinde;



Som Vedtægts Kirkestormer Manden gjaldt,  
 Hans Kjærlighed slog ud i glade Sange!  
 Se paa ham nu! I Kisteklæder lange,  
 Et Tobensdrama om hvor dybt han faldt!  
 Og Fruentimret med de slukne Skjört,  
 Med skjæve Sko, som klasker under Hælene,  
 Hun er den Vingemö, som skulde fört  
 Ham ind till Samfundsliv med Skönhedssjælene.  
 Hvad er igjen af Flammen? Neppe Rögen!  
 Sit transit gloria amoris, Fröken!

IBSEN: *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

M.

Vi vil ej sogne mer till Platheds Kirke,  
 Som Led af Trivialitetens Menighed!  
 Se, Maalet for Personlighedens Virke  
 Er dog at staa selvstændig, sand og fri.

IBSEN: *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, i.

N.

FALK.

Saa mange Hoveder, saa mange Sind!  
 Nej, alle famler de paa gale Veje.  
 Hver Lignelse er skjæv; men hör nu min;—  
 Den kan paa hver en Vis De sno og dreje.  
 Der gror en Plante i det fjerne Öst;  
 Dens Odelshjem er Solens Fætters Have—

DAMERNE.

Aa, det er Theen!

## FALK.

Ja . . .

Den har sit Hjem i Fabellandets Dale,  
 Vel tusind Mile bagom Örkner golde;—  
 Fyld Koppen, Lind! Saa Takk! Nu skal jeg holde  
 Om The og Kjærlighed en Thevandstale.

*(Gjæsterne rykker nærmere sammen).*

Den har sit Hjem i Eventyrets Land;  
 Ak *der* har ogsaa Kjærligheden hjemme.  
 Kun Solens Sønner, ved vi, fik Forstand,  
 Paa Urtens Dyrkning, paa dens Røgt og Fremme.  
 Med Kjærligheden er det ligesaa.  
 En Draabe Solblod maa i Aaren slaa,  
 Hvis Kjærlighed skal skyde Rod derinde,  
 Skal grønnes, gro, og frem till Blomstring vinde.

. . . . .

## FRÖKEN SKJÆRE.

Men Kjærlighed og Kjærlighed er et;  
 Af The der gives baade god og slett.

## FRU STRAAMAND.

Ja, man har The i mange Kvaliteter.

## ANNA.

De grønne Foraarsspirer allerførst—

## SVANHILD.

Den Slags er kun for Solens Döttres Törst.

## EN UNG DAME.

Man skildrer den berusende som Æther,—

## EN ANDEN.

Som Lotos duftende, og sød som Mandelen.

## GULDSTAD.

Den forekommer aldrig her i Handelen.

## FALK.

Ak, mine Damer, hver i sin Natur  
 Har og et særligt lidet "himmelsk Rige."  
 Der knopped sig af Spirer tusind slige  
 Bag Blyheds faldende Kinesermur.  
 Men Fantasiens smaa Kineserdukker,  
 Som sidder i Kioskens Ly og sukker,  
 Som drømmer vidt—saa vidt—med Slør om Læn-  
 derne,  
 Med gyldne Tulipaners Flor i Hænderne,—  
 Till dem I Förstegrödens Knopper sanked.

. . . . .  
 Og saa det sisæ store Lighedspunkt ;  
 Se hvor Kulturens Haand har lagt sig tungt  
 Paa "Himmelriget" i det fjerne Östen ;  
 Dets Mur forfalder og dets Magt er sprængt,  
 Den sidste ægte Mandarin er hængt,  
 Profane Hænder alt besörger Hösten.  
 Snart "Himlens Rige" er en Saga blot,  
 Et Eventyr, som ingen længer tror paa ;

Den hele Verden er et graat i graat ;  
Vidunderlandet har vi kastet Jord paa.  
Men har vi det, hvor er da Kjærligheden ?  
Åk, da er ogsaa den jo vandret heden.  
Naa, lad forgaa, hvad Tiden ej kan bære ;  
En Thevandsskaal till sa'ig Amors Ære !

IBSEN : *Kjærlighedens Komædie*, ii.

O.

EJNAR.

Agnes, min dejlige Sommerfugl,  
Dig vil jeg legende fange !  
Jeg fletter et Garn med Masker små  
Og Maskerne er mine Sange.

AGNES.

Er jeg en Sommerfugl, liden og skær,  
Så lad mig af Lyngtoppen drikke ;  
Og er du en Gut, som lyster en Leg,  
Så jag mig, men *fang* mig ikke !

EJNAR.

Agnes, min dejlige Sommerfugl,  
Nu har jeg Maskerne flettet ;  
Dig hjælper visst aldrig din flagrende Flugt,—  
Snart sidder du fangen i Nettet !

AGNES.

Er jeg en Sommerfugl, ung og blank,  
Jeg lystig i Legen mig svinger ;

Men fanger du mig under Nettets Spind,  
Så rör ikke ved mine Vinger.

EJNAR.

Nej, jeg skal løfte dig varligt på Hånd  
Og lukke dig ind i mit Hjerte ;  
Der kan du lege dit hele Liv  
Den gladeste Leg, du lærte !

IBSEN : *Brand*, i.

P.

PIGERNES KOR.

Profeten er kommen !  
Profeten, Herren, den alting vidende,  
Till os, till os, er han kommen,  
Over Sandhavet ridende ;  
Profeten, Herren, den aldrig fejlende,  
Till os, till os er han kommen  
Gjennem Sandhavet sejlene !  
Rör Fløjten og Trommen ;  
Profeten, Profeten er kommen !

ANITRA.

Hans Ganger er Mælken, den hvide,  
Som strømmer i Paradisets Floder.  
Bøj eders Knæ ! Sænk eders Hoder !  
Hans Öjne er Stjerner, blinkende, blide.  
Intet Jordbarn dog taaler  
Glansens Glans af de Stjerner Straaler !

Gjennem Örken han kom.  
 Guld og Perler sprang frem paa hans Bryst.  
 Hvor han red blev det lyst.  
 Bag ham blev Mörke ;  
 Bag ham foer Samum og Törke.  
 Han, den herlige, kom !  
 Gjennem Örken han kom,  
 Som en Jordsön pyntet.  
 Kaba, Kaba staar tom:—  
 Han har selv forkyndt det !

KOR.

Rör Flöjten og Trommen ;  
 Profeten, Profeten er kommen !

IBSEN : *Peer Gynt*, iv.

Q.

HUHU.

Saa laan mig Öre—  
 Fjernt i Öst, som Krans om Pande,  
 Staar de malebarske Strande,  
 Portugiser og Hollænder  
 Landet med Kultur bespænder.  
 Desforuden boer der Skarer  
 Af de ægte Malebarer.  
 Disse Folk har Sproget blandet ;  
 De er Herrer nu i Landet.  
 Men i Tiden længst forgangen  
 Raaded der Orangutangen,

Han var Skogens Mand og Herre ;  
 Frit han turde slaa og snærre.  
 Som Naturens Haand ham skabte,  
 Saa han gren og saa han gabte.  
 Uforment han turde skrige ;  
 Han var Hersker i sit Rige.  
 Ak, men saa kom Fremmedaaget  
 Og forplumred Urskogs-Sproget.  
 Firehundredaarig Natten  
 Ruged over Abekatten ;  
 Skal vi vore Tanker male,  
 Maa det ske ved Hjælp af Tale.  
 Jeg har prøvet paa at fægte  
 For vort Urskogs-Maal, det ægte,—  
 Prøvet at belive Liget,—  
 Hævdet Folkets Rett till Skriget,—  
 Skreget selv, og paavist Trangen  
 Till dets Brug i Folkesangen.

IBSEN : *Peer Gynt*, iv.

R.

I Loufod Norden hen, i Norrigs Konge-riige,  
 Een Ström befindes stoor, som ej hâr mange Liige,  
 Den kaldes Moske-ström, af Mosker spits hin høje,  
 Som Strømmen runden om ret artig veed at plöje.  
 Naar denne gjør sin fliid oc Maanens Verk forretter,  
 Oc nogen kommer nær, hand Verden snart forgætter.  
 Den Bylge reis' i vær som andre Bierge høje,  
 Mand der igiennem kand see Soolen Verdens Öje.

Er Vinden Strømmen mod, to helte sammen riide,  
 Oc med sligt bulder stoor imod hver andre striide,  
 At Land oc Huus der ved, ja Dor oc Vindu ryste,  
 Oc tagø saa af sted, som Jorden skulde bryste.  
 Den stærke Trolde-hval kand der ei giennem bryde,  
 Men trecker vred derfra, forfærdelig maae skryde.

ARREBO : *Hexaameron*, ed. 1661, p. 102.

## S.

Min Mæning er der om, at der af Klipper høje  
 En Skærgaard i det Dyb maa sig tilhobe føje,  
 Som een Indkiørsel haer, men ellers steen berunded,  
 Oc midt i samme Gaard en runder Klippe fundet.  
 Naar Strømmen kommer nu, forfærdelig den bruuser,  
 Oc ind ad samme Poort som tusend fosse fuuser,  
 Oc ingen Udgang haer, den svirer oc regierer,  
 Oc höjen middel Steen ret runden om spatserer,  
 Thi snurrer den med Mact, som qvænen, naar mand  
 maler.

ARREBO : *Hexaameron*, ed. 1661, p. 103.

## T.

Som då ett vårmoln hviler sin glans bland träden på kullen,  
 Buskarne fröjdas och björkarna stå i stilla förundran,  
 Skådande morgonens prakt och det rosenfärgade molnet.  
 Tills ur sitt sköte det sänder en fläkt, då svigta de späda  
 Grenarnes skott, och de krusiga löfven skälfva af vällust ;  
 Mindre bäfvar också ej gossen, då Hedda han åhör.

RUNEBERG : *Elgskyttarne*, iii. 111-116.



## U.

Icke så rik är på blommor en äng i den varmeste sommar,  
 Barn, som på glädje den väg, der vi gå mot grafven  
 beständigt,

Endast vi akta oss väl, alt ej hoppet, det hala, bedrager ;  
 Ty hvar vi stanna en stund att njuta en lycka, i blinken  
 Springer der hoppet förut och visar en bättre på afstånd.  
 Dären följer den lysten från en till en annan och ratar,  
 Aldrig förnöjd, tills slutligt han suckande hinnes af döden.

RUNEBERG : *Elgskyttarne*, v. 345-351.

## V.

Rodnande syntes hon der, i sin blyghet ljud till förundran :  
 Lik en strimma af sjön, som, af morgenstrålar begjuten,  
 Smyger sig in och rodnar emellan skuggiga lunder.

RUNEBERG : *Hanna*, i. 133-136.

## W.

“Ser du den rodnande sjön,” så sade han, “ser du, hur olik  
 Hafvet, som suckande slår mot din hembygds klippiga  
 stränder ?

Här är grönska och färger och lif. Otaliga holmar  
 Skjuta ur vågorna upp, och svajande vinka från alla  
 Lummiga trän, som bjuda den tröttade roddaren skugga.  
 Nalkas du udden, som nu tycks träffa det mötande landet,  
 Öppnas en vidare rymd af vatten, och trefliga byar  
 Skymta på stränderna fram, och kyrkan lyser i fjerran.

RUNEBERG : *Hanna*, lii. 9-16.

## X.

Kom, Oihonna, mig följ i lifvet,  
Jägarn älskar dig, rosiga sky  
Höga fjällarnes furste  
Ber dig dela hans bancrs lust.

Såg du rymdernas glada syner  
Högt från bergen i morgonens stund,  
Såg du vaknade strålar  
Dricka skälfvande dimmors dagg?

Mins du skogarnes ljud, då vinden  
Rör med vingen de darrande löf,  
Fogeln jublar, och rusig  
Mellan hållarne bäcken flyr?

Eller vet du, hur hjertat klappar,  
När vid hornens och hundarnes skall  
Busken prasslar, och hjorten  
Står för ögat med hejdadt språng?

Flicka, älskar du dunkla qvällen  
Bleka stjernornas bäfvande ljus?  
Kom, från toppen af Mallmor  
Låt oss skåda, hur natten föds.

O, jag suttit på fjället ofta,  
När i vester sin skimrande port  
Solen slutit, och rodnan  
Stilla vissnat på molnets hy.

Druckit svalkan af qvällens ande,  
 Skuggans vandring i dälderna sett,  
 Låtit tankarne irra  
 Kring den nattliga tystnans hat.

Skönt är lifvet på skyars höjdar,  
 Lätt man andas i doftande skog;  
 Blif min brud, och jag öppnar  
 För ditt hjerta en verld af fröjd.

RUNEBERG: *Kung Fjalar*, ii. 103-144.

#### Y.—TORPFLICKAN.

Och solen sjönk och qvällen kom, den milda sommar-  
 qvällen,  
 Ett sken af mattad purpur göts kring bygderna och tjällen,  
 Från dagens mödor glad och trött en skara landtmän kom,  
 De fyllt sitt värf, de vände nu till sina hyddor om.

De fyllt sitt värf, de gjort sin skörd, en dyrbar skörd den  
 gången,  
 En djerf, fiendtlig krigartrupp var nedgjord eller fången,  
 De dragit ut kill kamp mot den vid morgonsolens sken,  
 När allt i seger ändadt var, då var det afton re'n.

Helt nära fältet, der den stått, den långa, heta striden,  
 Vid vägen låg ett litet torp, halft öde då för tiden,  
 På stugans låga trappa satt en flicka tyst och såg,  
 Hur skaran kom och drog förbi i fridsamt återtåg.

Hon såg som den, som söker, ser, hvem vet, på hvad hon tänkte?

På kinden brann en högre färg, än aftonrodnan skänkte,  
Hon satt så stilla, men så varm, så spannade ändå,  
Att, om hon lyssnat, som hon såg, hon hört sitt hjerta slå.

Men truppen gick sin bana fram, och flickan såg den tåga,  
Till hvarje led, till hvarje man hon blickade en fråga,  
En fråga, bäfvande och skvgg, en fråga utan röst,  
Mer tyst än sucken sjeif, som smög ur hennes fulla bröst.

När hela skaran gått förbi, de första som de sista,  
Då svek den arma flickans lugn, då sågs dess styrka brista,  
Hon grät ej högt, men pannan sjönk mot hennes öppna hand

Och stora tårar sköljde ljuft den friska kindens brand.

“Hvad är at gråta? Fatta mod, än står oss hoppet åter,

O dotter, hör din moders röst, en fåfäng tår du gråter;  
Den, som ditt öga sökte nyss, och nu ej återfann,  
Han lefver än, han tänkt på dig, och därför lefver han.

“Han tänkt på dig, han följt mitt råd att ej gå blindt mot faran,

Det var mitt tysta afskedsord, då han drog hän med skaran.

Af tvång han följde truppen åt, hans håg var ej at slåss,  
Jag vet, han ville icke dö från lifvets fröjd och oss.”

Och flickan såg med bäfven upp, ur sorgsna drömmar  
vacknad,

Det var som om en aning stört det stilla hjertats saknad,  
Hon dröjde ej, hon såg en gång ditåt, der striden brann ;  
Och smög på väg och flydde tyst och skymdes och försvann.

En stund flöt bort, en stund ännu, det led mot natten redan,  
I skyndsam molnet silfverhvit, men skymning låg der nedan.  
" Hon dröjer än ; o dotter, kom, din oro fåfång är,  
I morgon, innan solen gryr, är re'n din brudgum här."

Och dottern kom, med tysta fjät hon nalkades sin moder,  
Det blida öget skymdes nu af inga tårefloder,  
Men hennes hand, till helsning räckt, var kall som nattens  
vind,  
Och hvitare än fästets sky var hennes svala kind.

" Red mig en graf, o moder kär, min lefnadsdag är liden ;  
Den man, som fick mitt hjertas tro, har flytt med skam ur  
striden ;  
Har tänkt på mig, har tänkt på sig, har följt ert varningsord  
Och svikit sina bröders hopp och sina fäders jord.

" När skaran kom, och han ej kom, begrät jag nyss hans  
öde,  
Jag trodde, att han låg som man på fältet bland de döde,  
Jag sörjde, men min sorg var ljuf, det var ej bitter då,  
Jag velat lefva tusen år, at honom sörja få.

" O moder, jag har sökt bland lik till sista skymt af dagen,  
Men ingen af de slagna bar de kära anletsdragen,

Nu vill jag icke dväljas ma på denna svekets ö,  
 Han fans ej bland de döda der, och därför vill jag dö."

RUNEBERG. *Fänrik Ståls Sägner.*

## Z.

Men ved min Side strakte  
 • En Yngling sig paa Bænken  
 I rolig Eftertænken  
 Og med et Drönimesmil,  
 Som dunkle Minder vakte  
 Om Kunstens Oldtidsstil.

Sandalen, som omgjorded  
 Hans Fod, var ziirlig knyttet,  
 En Arm hans Hoved stötted,  
 Den anden med sit Glæde  
 Laa nögen henad Bordet,  
 Som stöbt af Phidias.

• • • • •  
 Og da jeg Öjet sænked,  
 Traf mig hiin Ynglings Blikke,—  
 Nei, Midnat ejer ikke  
 Saa stærkt et Stjernespil,  
 Mit Öje hang som lænket  
 Til denne muntre Ild!

BÖDTER: *Mödet med Bacchus.*

## AA.

Hans sænkede Pokalen,  
 Der kom en Ildcascade,

En Brusen, som i Blade,  
Og saa en Duft af Viin,  
Der fyldte Klippesalen  
Med Roser og Jasmin.

Jeg drak, mens Öjet stirred  
Bag Gnister og bag Dampe,—  
Det var en magisk Lampe,  
Et mystisk Perleslör,  
Hvori jeg saae forvirret,  
Men skjønnere end för.

Mig var det, som Colonner  
Fra Gulvet steg med Bulder  
Og skjöd en Marmorskulder  
Ind under Kupplens Last,  
Og Epheu bandt Festonner  
Om Murens Alabast.

En sælsom Taage var der  
Med Ect de muntre Fade  
Forsvandt fra deres Stade,  
Og alvorsfuldt der laa  
Syv gule Leopard  
Med Labben krydset, skraa.

BÖDTCHER : *Mödet med Bacchus*

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